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# VILLETTE.

BY CURRER BELL,

AUTHOR OF "JANE EYRE," "SHIRLEY," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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# VILLETTE.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE WATCHGUARD.

M. PAUL EMANUEL owned an acute sensitiveness to the annoyance of interruption, from whatsoever cause, occurring during his lessons: to pass through the classe under such circumstances was considered by the teachers and pupils of the school, individually and collectively, to be as much as a woman's or girl's life was worth.

Madame Beck herself, if forced to the enterprise, would "skurry" through, retrenching her skirts, and carefully coasting the formidable estrade, like a ship dreading breakers. As to Rosine, the portress — on whom, every half-hour, devolved the fearful



duty of fetching pupils out of the very heart of one or other of the divisions, to take their music-lessons in the oratory, the great or little salon, the *salle à manger*, or some other piano-station—she would, upon her second or third attempt, frequently become almost tongue-tied from excess of consternation—a sentiment inspired by the unspeakable looks levelled at her through a pair of dart-dealing spectacles.

One morning I was sitting in the *carré*, at work upon a piece of embroidery which one of the pupils had commenced but delayed to finish, and while my fingers wrought at the frame, my ears regaled themselves with listening to the crescendos and cadences of a voice haranguing in the neighbouring *classe*, in tones that waxed momentarily more unquiet, more ominously varied. There was a good strong partition-wall between me and the gathering storm, as well as a facile means of flight through the glass-door to the court, in case it swept this way; so I am afraid I derived more amusement than alarm from these thickening symptoms. Poor Rosine was not so safe: four times that blessed morning had she made the passage of peril; and now, for the fifth time it became her dangerous

duty to snatch, as it were, a brand from the burning—a pupil from under M. Paul's nose.

“ Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!” cried she. “ Que vais-je devenir? Monsieur va me tuer, je suis sure; car il est d'une colère!”

Nerved by the courage of desperation, she opened the door.

“ Mademoiselle La Malle au piano!” was her cry. Ere she could make good her retreat, or quite close the door, this voice uttered itself:—

“ Dès ce moment!—la classe est défendue. La première qui ouvrira cette porte, ou passera par cette division, sera pendue—fut-ce Madame Beck elle même!”

Ten minutes had not succeeded the promulgation of this decree, when Rosine's French pantoufles were again heard shuffling along the corridor.

“ Mademoiselle,” said she, “ I would not for a five franc piece go into that classe again just now: Monsieur's lunettes are really terrible; and here is a commissionaire come with a message from the Athénée. I have told Madame Beck I dare not deliver it, and she says I am to charge you with it.”

“ Me? No, that is rather too bad! It is not in

my line of duty. Come, come, Rosine! bear your own burden. Be brave—charge once more!”

“I, Mademoiselle?—impossible! Five times I have crossed him this day. Madame must really hire a gendarme for this service. Ouf! Je n’en puis plus!”

“Bah! you are only a coward. What is the message?”

“Precisely of the kind with which Monsieur least likes to be pestered: an urgent summons to go directly to the Athénée, as there is an official visitor—inspector—I know not what—arrived, and Monsieur *must* meet him: you know how he hates a *must*.”

Yes, I knew well enough. The restive little man detested spur or curb: against whatever was urgent or obligatory, he was sure to revolt. However, I accepted the responsibility—not, certainly, without fear, but fear blent with other sentiments, curiosity amongst them. I opened the door, I entered, I closed it behind me as quickly and quietly as a rather unsteady hand would permit; for to be slow or bustling, to rattle a latch, or leave a door gaping wide, were aggravations of crime, often more disastrous in result than the main crime itself. There I stood then, and there he sat; his humour was visibly



bad—almost at its worst; he had been giving a lesson in arithmetic—for he gave lessons on any and every subject that struck his fancy—and arithmetic being a dry subject, invariably disagreed with him: not a pupil but trembled when he spoke of figures. He sat, bent above his desk: to look up at the sound of an entrance, at the occurrence of a direct breach of his will and law, was an effort he could not for the moment bring himself to make. It was quite as well: I thus gained time to walk up the long classe; and it suited my idiosyncrasy far better to encounter the near burst of anger like his, than to bear its menace at a distance.

At his estrade I paused, just in front; of course I was not worthy of immediate attention: he proceeded with his lesson. Disdain would not do: he must hear and he must answer my message.

Not being quite tall enough to lift my head over his desk, elevated upon the estrade, and thus suffering eclipse in my present position, I ventured to peep round, with the design, at first, of merely getting a better view of his face, which had struck me when I entered as bearing a close and picturesque resemblance to that of a black and sallow tiger. Twice did I enjoy this side-view with im-

punity, advancing and receding unseen; the third time my eye had scarce dawned beyond the obscuration of the desk, when it was caught and transfixed through its very pupil—transfixed by the “lunettes.” Rosine was right; these utensils had in them a blank and immutable terror, beyond the mobile wrath of the wearer’s own unglazed eyes.

I now found the advantage of proximity: these short-sighted “lunettes” were useless for the inspection of a criminal under Monsieur’s nose; accordingly, he doffed them, and he and I stood on more equal terms.

I am glad I was not really much afraid of him—that, indeed, close in his presence, I felt no terror at all; for upon his demanding cord and gibbet to execute the sentence recently pronounced, I was able to furnish him with a needleful of embroidering thread with such accommodating civility as could not but allay some portion at least of his surplus irritation. Of course I did not parade this courtesy before public view: I merely handed the thread round the angle of the desk, and attached it, ready noosed, to the barred back of the Professor’s chair.

“Que me voulez-vous?” said he, in a growl of

which the music was wholly confined to his chest and throat, for he kept his teeth clenched, and seemed registering to himself an inward vow, that nothing earthly should wring from him a smile. My answer commenced uncompromisingly:—

“Monsieur,” I said, “je veux l'impossible, des choses inouïes;” and thinking it best not to mince matters, but to administer the “douche” with decision, in a low but quick voice, I delivered the Athenian message, floridly exaggerating its urgency.

Of course, he would not hear a word of it. “He would not go; he would not leave his present class, let all the officials in Villette send for him. He would not put himself an inch out of his way at the bidding of king, cabinet, and chambers together.”

I knew, however, that he *must* go; that, talk as he would, both his duty and interest commanded an immediate and literal compliance with the summons: I stood, therefore, waiting in silence, as if he had not yet spoken. He asked what more I wanted.

“Only Monsieur’s answer to deliver to the commissioner.”

He waved an impatient negative.

I ventured to stretch my hand to the bonnet-grec which lay in grim repose on the window-sill. He followed this daring movement with his eye, no doubt in mixed pity and amazement at its presumption.

"Ah!" he muttered, "if it came to that—if Miss Lucy meddled with his bonnet-grec—she might just put it on herself, turn garçon for the occasion, and benevolently go to the Athénée in his stead."

With great respect, I laid the bonnet on the desk, where its tassel seemed to give me an awful nod.

"I'll write a note of apology—that will do?" said he, still bent on evasion.

Knowing well it would *not* do, I gently pushed the bonnet towards his hand. Thus impelled, it slid down the polished slope of the varnished and unbaized desk, carried before it the light steel-framed "lunettes," and, fearful to relate, they fell to the estrade. A score of times ere now had I seen them fall and receive no damage—*this* time, as Lucy Snowe's hapless luck would have it, they

so fell that each clear pebble became a shivered and shapeless star.

Now, indeed, dismay seized me — dismay and regret. I knew the value of those “lunettes:” M. Paul’s sight was peculiar, not easily fitted, and these glasses suited him. I had heard him call them his treasures: as I picked them up, cracked and worthless, my hand trembled. Frightened through all my nerves I was to see the mischief I had done, but I think I was even more sorry than afraid. For some seconds I dared not look the bereaved Professor in the face; he was the first to speak.

“Là!” said he: “me voilà veuf de mes lunettes! I think Mademoiselle Lucy will now confess that the cord and gallows are amply earned; she trembles in anticipation of her doom. Ah, traitress! traitress! You are resolved to have me quite blind and helpless in your hands!”

I lifted my eyes: his face, instead of being irate, lowering, and furrowed, was overflowing with the smile, coloured with the bloom I had seen brightening it that evening at the Hôtel Crécy. He was not angry—not even grieved. For the real injury he showed himself full of clemency; under the real



provocation, patient as a saint. This event, which seemed so untoward—which I thought had ruined at once my chance of successful persuasion—proved my best help. Difficult of management so long as I had done him no harm, he became graciously pliant as soon as I stood in his presence, a conscious and contrite offender.

Still gently railing at me as “une forte femme—une Anglaise terrible—une petite casse-tout”—he declared that he dared not but obey one who had given such an instance of her dangerous prowess ; it was absolutely like the “grand Empereur, smashing the vase to inspire dismay.” So, at last, crowning himself with his bonnet-grec, and taking his ruined “lunettes” from my hand with a clasp of kind pardon and encouragement, he made his bow, and went off to the Athénée in first-rate humour and spirits.

---

After all this amiability, the reader will be sorry for my sake to hear that I was quarrelling with M. Paul again before night ; yet so it was, and I could not help it.

It was his occasional custom—and a very laud-

able, acceptable custom, too—to arrive of an evening, always à l'improviste, unannounced, burst in on the silent hour of study, establish a sudden despotism over us and our occupations, cause books to be put away, work-bags to be brought out, and, drawing forth a single thick volume, or a handful of pamphlets, substitute for the besotted “lecture pieuse,” drawled by a sleepy pupil, some tragedy made grand by grand reading, ardent by fiery action—some drama, whereof, for my part, I rarely studied the intrinsic merit; for M. Emanuel made it a vessel for an outpouring, and filled it with his native verve and passion like a cup with a vital brewage. Or else he would flash through our conventual darkness a reflex of a brighter world, show us a glimpse of the current literature of the day, read us passages from some enchanting tale, or the last witty feuilleton which had awakened laughter in the saloons of Paris; taking care always to expunge, with the severest hand, whether from tragedy, melo-drama, tale, or essay, whatever passage, phrase, or word, could be deemed unsuited to an audience of “jeunes filles.” I noticed more than once, that where retrenchment without substitute would have left unmeaning vacancy, or intro-

duced weakness, he could, and did, improvise whole paragraphs, no less vigorous than irreproachable: the dialogue—the description—he engrafted was often far better than that he pruned away.

Well, on the evening in question, we were sitting silent as nuns in a “retreat,” the pupils studying, the teachers working. I remember my work; it was a slight matter of fancy, and it rather interested me; it had a purpose; I was not doing it merely to kill time; I meant it when finished as a gift; and the occasion of presentation being near, haste was requisite, and my fingers were busy.

We heard the sharp bell-peal which we all knew; then the rapid step familiar to each ear: the words “Voilà Monsieur!” had scarcely broken simultaneously from every lip, when the two-leaved door split (as split it always did for his admission—such a slow word as “open” is inefficient to describe his movements), and he stood in the midst of us.

There were two study-tables, both long and flanked with benches; over the centre of each hung a lamp; beneath this lamp, on either side the table, sat a teacher; the girls were arranged to the right hand and the left; the eldest and most studious

nearest the lamps or tropics; the idlers and little ones towards the north and south poles. Monsieur's habit was politely to hand a chair to some teacher, generally Zélie St. Pierre, the senior mistress; then to take her vacated seat; and thus avail himself of the full beam of Cancer or Capricorn, which, owing to his near sight, he needed.

As usual, Zélie rose with alacrity, smiling to the whole extent of her mouth, and the full display of her upper and under rows of teeth—that strange smile which passes from ear to ear, and is marked only by a sharp thin curve, which fails to spread over the countenance, and neither dimples the cheek nor lights the eye. I suppose Monsieur did not see her, or he had taken a whim that he would not notice her, for he was as capricious as women are said to be; then his “lunettes” (he had got another pair) served him as an excuse for all sorts of little oversights and short-comings. Whatever might be his reason, he passed by Zélie, came to the other side of the table, and before I could start up to clear the way, whispered, “Ne bougez pas,” and established himself between me and Miss Fanshawe, who always would be my neighbour, and



have her elbow in my side, however often I declared to her,—

“Ginevra, I wish you were at Jericho.”

It was easy to say, “*Ne bougez pas* ;” but how could I help it? I must make him room, and I must request the pupils to recede that *I* might recede. It was very well for Ginevra to be gummed to me, “keeping herself warm,” as she said, on the winter evenings, and harassing my very heart with her fidgetings and pokings, obliging me, indeed, sometimes to put an artful pin in my girdle by way of protection against her elbow; but I suppose M. Emanuel was not to be subjected to the same kind of treatment, so I swept away my working materials, to clear space for his book, and withdrew myself, to make room for his person; not, however, leaving more than a yard of interval, just what any reasonable man would have regarded as a convenient, respectful allowance of bench. But M. Emanuel never *was* reasonable; flint and tinder that he was! he struck and took fire directly.

“*Vous ne voulez pas de moi pour voisin*,” he growled: “vous vous donnez des airs de caste; vous me traitez en paria;” he scowled. “*Soit! je vais arranger la chose!*” And he set to work.

“Levez vous toutes, mesdemoiselles!” cried he.

The girls rose. He made them all file off to the other table. He then placed me at one extremity of the long bench, and having duly and carefully brought me my work-basket, silk, scissors, all my implements, he fixed himself quite at the other end.

At this arrangement, highly absurd as it was, not a soul in the room dared to laugh; luckless for the giggler would have been the giggle. As for me, I took it with entire coolness. There I sat, isolated and cut off from human intercourse; I sat and minded my work, and was quiet, and not at all unhappy.

“Est ce assez de distance?” he demanded.

“Monsieur en est l'arbitre,” said I.

“Vous savez bien que non. C'est vous qui avez créé ce vide immense: moi je n'y ai pas mis la main.”

And with this assertion he commenced the reading.

For his misfortune he had chosen a French translation of what he called “un drame de Williams Shackspeare; le faux dieu,” he further announced, “de ces sots païens, les Anglais.” How far other-



wise he would have characterized him had his temper not been upset, I scarcely need intimate.

Of course, the translation being French, was very inefficient; nor did I make any particular effort to conceal the contempt which some of its forlorn lapses were calculated to excite. Not that it behoved or beseemed me to *say* anything; but one can occasionally *look* the opinion it is forbidden to embody in words. Monsieur's lunettes being on the alert, he gleamed up every stray look; I don't think he lost one: the consequence was, his eyes soon discarded a screen, that their blaze might sparkle free, and he waxed hotter at the north pole to which he had voluntarily exiled himself, than, considering the general temperature of the room, it would have been reasonable to become under the vertical ray of Cancer itself.

The reading over, it appeared problematic whether he would depart with his anger unexpressed, or whether he would give it vent. Suppression was not much in his habits; but still, what had been done to him definite enough to afford matter for overt reproof? I had not uttered a sound, and could not justly be deemed amenable to reprimand or penalty for having permitted a slightly freer

action than usual to the muscles about my eyes and mouth.

The supper, consisting of bread, and milk diluted with tepid water, was brought in. In respectful consideration of the professor's presence, the rolls and glasses were allowed to stand instead of being immediately handed round.

"Take your supper, ladies," said he, seeming to be occupied in making marginal notes to his "Williams Shackspire." They took it. I also accepted a roll and glass, but being now more than ever interested in my work, I kept my seat of punishment, and wrought while I munched my bread and sipped my beverage, the whole with easy *sang froid*; with a certain snugness of composure, indeed, scarcely in my habits, and pleasantly novel to my feelings. It seemed as if the presence of a nature so restless, chafing, thorny as that of M. Paul absorbed all feverish and unsettling influences like a magnet, and left me none but such as were placid and harmonious.

He rose. "Will he go away without saying another word?" Yes; he turned to the door.

No: he *re*-turned on his steps; but only, per-

haps, to take his pencil-case, which had been left on the table.

He took it—shut the pencil in and out, broke its point against the wood, re-cut and pocketed it, and . . . . walked promptly up to me.

The girls and teachers, gathered round the other table, were talking pretty freely : they always talked at meals ; and, from the constant habit of speaking fast and loud at such times, did not now subdue their voices much.

M. Paul came and stood behind me. He asked at what I was working ; and I said I was making a watchguard.

He asked, “ For whom ? ” And I answered, “ For a gentleman—one of my friends.”

M. Paul stooped down and proceeded — as novel-writers say, and as was literally true in his case—to “ hiss ” into my ear some poignant words.

He said that, of all the women he knew, I was the one who could make herself the most consummately unpleasant : I was she with whom it was least possible to live on friendly terms. I had a “ caractère intraitable ” and perverse to a miracle. How I managed it, or what possessed me, he, for

his part, did not know ; but with whatever pacific and amicable intentions a person accosted me — crac ! I turned concord to discord, good-will to enmity. He was sure, he—M. Paul—wished me well enough ; he had never done me any harm that he knew of ; he might, at least, he supposed, claim a right to be regarded as a neutral acquaintance, guiltless of hostile sentiments : yet, how I behaved to him ! With what pungent vivacities—what an impetus of mutiny—what a “fougue” of injustice !

Here I could not avoid opening my eyes somewhat wide, and even slipping in a slight interjectional observation :

“ Vivacities ? Impetus ? Fougue ? I did n’t know . . . . ”

“ Chut ! à l’instant ! There ! there I went—vive comme la poudre ! ” He was sorry—he was very sorry : for my sake he grieved over the hapless peculiarity. This “ emportement,” this “ chaleur ”—generous, perhaps, but excessive—would yet, he feared, do me a mischief. It was a pity : I was not—he believed, in his soul—wholly without good qualities ; and would I but hear reason, and be more sedate, more sober, less “ en l’air,” less

“coquette,” less taken by show, less prone to set an undue value on outside excellence—to make much of the attentions of people remarkable chiefly for so many feet of stature, “des couleurs de poupée,” “un nez plus ou moins bien fait,” and an enormous amount of fatuity—I might yet prove an useful, perhaps an exemplary, character. But, as it was——And here, the little man’s voice was for a minute choked.

I would have looked up at him, or held out my hand, or said a soothing word ; but I was afraid, if I stirred, I should either laugh or cry ; so odd, in all this, was the mixture of the touching and the absurd.

I thought he had nearly done : but no ; he sat down that he might go on at his ease.

“While he, M. Paul, was on these painful topics, he would dare my anger for the sake of my good, and would venture to refer to a change he had noticed in my dress. He was free to confess that when he first knew me—or, rather, was in the habit of catching a passing glimpse of me from time to time—I satisfied him on this point : the gravity, the austere simplicity, obvious in this particular, were such as to inspire the highest hopes for my best interests. What fatal influence had



impelled me lately to introduce flowers under the brim of my bonnet, to wear ‘*des cols brodés*,’ and even to appear on one occasion in a *scarlet gown*—he might indeed conjecture, but, for the present, would not openly declare.”

Again I interrupted, and this time not without an accent at once indignant and horror-struck.

“Scarlet, Monsiur Paul? It was not scarlet! It was pink, and pale pink, too; and further subdued by black lace.”

“Pink or scarlet, yellow or crimson, pea-green or sky-blue; it was all one: these were all flaunting, giddy colours; and as to the lace I talked of, *that* was but a ‘*colifichet de plus*.’” And he sighed over my degeneracy. “He could not, he was sorry to say, be so particular on this theme as he could wish: not possessing the exact names of these ‘*babioles*,’ he might run into small verbal errors which would not fail to lay him open to my sarcasm, and excite my unhappily sudden and passionate disposition. He would merely say, in general terms—and in these general terms he knew he was correct—that my costume had of late assumed ‘*des façons mondaines*,’ which it wounded him to see.”



What “*façons mondaines*” he discovered in my present winter merino and plain white collar, I own it puzzled me to guess: and when I asked him, he said it was all made with too much attention to effect—and besides, “had I not a bow of ribbon at my neck?”

“And if you condemn a bow of ribbon for a lady, monsieur, you would necessarily disapprove of a thing like this for a gentleman?”—holding up my bright little chainlet of silk and gold. His sole reply was a groan—I suppose over my levity.

After sitting some minutes in silence, and watching the progress of the chain, at which I now wrought more assiduously than ever, he inquired:

“Whether what he had just said would have the effect of making me entirely detest him?”

I hardly remember what answer I made, or how it came about; I don’t think I spoke at all, but I know we managed to bid good-night on friendly terms: and, even after M. Paul had reached the door, he turned back just to explain, “that he would not be understood to speak in entire condemnation of the scarlet dress” (“Pink! pink!” I threw in); “that he had no intention to deny it the merit of *looking* rather well” (the fact was,

M. Emanuel's taste in colours decidedly leaned to the brilliant); "only he wished to counsel me, whenever I wore it, to do so in the same spirit as if its material were 'bure,' and its hue 'gris de poussière.'"

"And the flowers under my bonnet, monsieur?" I asked. "They are very little ones—?"

"Keep them little, then," said he. "Permit them not to become full-blown."

"And the bow, monsieur—the bit of ribbon?"

"Va pour le ruban!" was the propitious answer. And so we settled it.

---

"Well done, Lucy Snowe!" cried I to myself; "you have come in for a pretty lecture—brought on yourself a 'rude savon,' and all through your wicked fondness for worldly vanities! Who would have thought it? You deemed yourself a melancholy sober-sides enough! Miss Fanshawe there regards you as a second Diogenes. M. de Bas-sompierre, the other day, politely turned the conversation when it ran on the wild gifts of the actress Vashti, because, as he kindly said, 'Miss Snowe looked uncomfortable.' Dr. John Bretton

knows you only as 'quiet Lucy'—'a creature inoffensive as a shadow;' he has said, and you have heard him say it: 'Lucy's disadvantages spring from over-gravity in tastes and manner—want of colour in character and costume.' Such are your own and your friends' impressions; and behold! there starts up a little man, differing diametrically from all these, roundly charging you with being too airy and cheery—too volatile and versatile—too flowery and coloury. This harsh little man—this pitiless censor—gathers up all your poor scattered sins of vanity, your luckless chiffon of rose-colour, your small fringe of a wreath, your small scrap of ribbon, your silly bit of lace, and calls you to account for the lot, and for each item. You are well habituated to be passed by as a shadow in Life's sunshine: it is a new thing to see one testily lifting his hand to screen his eyes, because you tease him with an obtrusive ray.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## MONSIEUR'S FÊTE.

I WAS up the next morning an hour before day-break, and finished my guard, kneeling on the dormitory floor beside the centre stand, for the benefit of such expiring glimmer as the night-lamp afforded in its last watch.

All my materials—my whole stock of beads and silk—were used up before the chain assumed the length and richness I wished; I had wrought it double, as I knew, by the rule of contraries, that to suit the particular taste whose gratification was in view, an effective appearance was quite indispensable. As a finish to the ornament, a little gold clasp was needed; fortunately I possessed it in the fastening of my sole necklace; I duly detached and re-attached it, then coiled compactly the completed guard, and enclosed it in a small box I had bought

for its brilliancy, made of some tropic shell of the colour called "nacarát," and decked with a little coronal of sparkling blue stones. Within the lid of the box, I carefully graved with my scissors' point certain initials.

---

The reader will, perhaps, remember the description of Madame Beck's fête; nor will he have forgotten that at each anniversary, a handsome present was subscribed for and offered by the school. The observance of this day was a distinction accorded to none but Madame, and, in a modified form, to her kinsman and counsellor, M. Emanuel. In the latter case it was an honour spontaneously awarded, not plotted and contrived beforehand, and offered an additional proof, amongst many others, of the estimation in which—despite his partialities, prejudices, and irritabilities—the professor of literature was held by his pupils. No article of value was offered to him: he distinctly gave it to be understood, that he would accept neither plate nor jewellery. Yet he liked a slight tribute; the cost, the money-value, did not touch him: a diamond ring, a gold snuff-box, presented with pomp, would



have pleased him less than a flower, or a drawing, offered simply and with sincere feelings. Such was his nature. He was a man, not wise in his generation, yet could he claim a filial sympathy with "the dayspring on high."

M. Paul's fête fell on the first of March and a Thursday. It proved a fine sunny day, and being likewise the morning on which it was customary to attend mass; being also otherwise distinguished by the half holiday which permitted the privilege of walking out, shopping, or paying visits in the afternoon: these combined considerations induced a general smartness and freshness of dress. Clean collars were in vogue; the ordinary dingy woollen classe-dress was exchanged for something lighter and clearer. Mademoiselle Zélie St. Pierre, on this particular Thursday, even assumed a "robe de soie," deemed in economical Labassecour an article of hazardous splendour and luxury; nay, it was remarked that she sent for a "coiffeur" to dress her hair that morning; there were pupils acute enough to discover that she had bedewed her handkerchief and her hands with a new and fashionable perfume. Poor Zélie! It was much her wont to declare about this time, that she was tired to death of a life



of seclusion and labour; that she longed to have the means and leisure for relaxation; to have some one to work for her—a husband who would pay her debts (she was wofully encumbered with debt), supply her wardrobe, and leave her at liberty, as she said, to “*goûter un peu les plaisirs*.” It had long been rumoured, that her eye was upon M. Emanuel. Monsieur Emanuel’s eye was certainly often upon her. He would sit and watch her perseveringly for minutes together. I have seen him give her a quarter of an hour’s gaze, while the class was silently composing, and he sat throned on his estrade, unoccupied. Conscious always of this basilisk attention, she would writhe under it, half-flattered, half-puzzled, and Monsieur would follow her sensations, sometimes looking appallingly acute; for in some cases, he had the terrible unerring penetration of instinct, and pierced in its hiding-place the last lurking thought of the heart, and discerned under florid veilings the bare, barren places of the spirit: yes, and its perverted tendencies, and its hidden false curves—all that men and women would not have known—the twisted spine, the mal-formed limb that was born with them, and far worse, the stain or disfigurement they have perhaps brought

on themselves. No calamity so accursed but M. Emanuel could pity and forgive, if it were acknowledged candidly; but where his questioning eyes met dishonest denial—where his ruthless rescarches found deceitful concealment—oh, then, he could be cruel, and I thought wicked! he could exultantly snatch the screen from poor shrinking wretches, passionately hurry them to the summit of the mount of exposure, and there show them all naked, all false—poor living lies—the spawn of that horrid Truth which cannot be looked on unveiled. He thought he did justice; for my part I doubt whether man has a right to do such justice on man: more than once in these his visitations, I have felt compelled to give tears to his victims, and not spared ire and keen reproach to himself. He deserved it; but it was difficult to shake him in his firm conviction that the work was righteous and needed.

Breakfast being over and mass attended, the school-bell rung and the rooms filled: a very pretty spectacle was presented in classe. Pupils and teachers sat neatly arrayed, orderly, and expectant, each bearing in her hand the bouquet of felicitation—the prettiest spring-flowers all fresh, and filling the air with their fragrance: I only had no bouquet. I

like to see flowers growing, but when they are gathered, they cease to please. I look on them as things rootless and perishable; their likeness to life makes me sad. I never offer flowers to those I love; I never wish to receive them from hands dear to me. Mademoiselle St. Pierre marked my empty hands—she could not believe I had been so remiss; with avidity her eye roved over and round me: surely I must have some solitary symbolic flower somewhere: some small knot of violets, something to win to myself praise for taste, commendation for ingenuity. The unimaginative “Anglaise” proved better than the Parisienne’s fears: she sat literally unprovided, as bare of bloom or leaf as the winter tree. This ascertained, Zélie smiled well pleased.

“How wisely you have acted to keep your money, Miss Lucie,” she said: “silly I have gone and thrown away two francs on a bouquet of hot-house flowers!”

And she showed with pride her splendid nosegay.

But hush! a step: *the* step. It came prompt, as usual, but with a promptitude, we felt disposed to flatter ourselves, inspired by other feelings than mere excitability of nerve, and vehemence of intent.

We thought our professor's "foot-fall" (to speak romantically) had in it a friendly promise this morning; and so it had.

He entered in a mood which made him as good as a new sunbeam to the already well-lit first-classe. The morning light, playing amongst our plants and laughing on our walls, caught an added lustre from M. Paul's all-benignant salute. Like a true Frenchman (though I don't know why I should say so, for he was of strain neither French nor Labassecourien), he had dressed for the "situation" and the occasion. Not by the vague folds, sinister and conspirator-like, of his soot-dark paletot were the outlines of his person obscured; on the contrary, his figure (such as it was, I don't boast of it) was well set off by a civilized coat and a silken vest quite pretty to behold. The defiant and pagan bonnet-grec had vanished: bare-headed he came upon us, carrying a Christian hat in his gloved hand. The little man looked well, very well; there was a clearness of amity in his blue eye, and a glow of good feeling on his dark complexion, which passed perfectly in the place of beauty: one really did not care to observe that his nose, though far from small, was of no particular shape, his cheek thin, his



brow marked and square, his mouth no rosebud : one accepted him as he was, and felt his presence the reverse of damping or insignificant.

He passed to his desk ; he placed on the same his hat and gloves. “ Bon jour, mes amies,” said he, in a tone that somehow made amends to some amongst us for many a sharp snap and savage snarl : not a jocund, good-fellow tone, still less an unctuous priestly accent, but a voice he had belonging to himself—a voice used when his heart passed the word to his lips. That same heart *did* speak sometimes ; though an irritable, it was not an ossified organ : in its core was a place, tender beyond a man’s tenderness ; a place that humbled him to little children, that bound him to girls and women : to whom, rebel as he would, he could not disown his affinity, nor quite deny that, on the whole, he was better with them than with his own sex.

“ We all wish Monsieur a good-day, and present to him our congratulations on the anniversary of his fête,” said Mademoiselle Zélie, constituting herself spokeswoman of the assembly ; and advancing, with no more twists of affectation than with her were indispensable to the achievement of motion, she laid her costly bouquet before him. He bowed over it.

The long train of offerings followed: all the pupils, sweeping past with the gliding step foreigners practise, left their tributes as they went by. Each girl so dexterously adjusted her separate gift that, when the last bouquet was laid on the desk, it formed the apex to a blooming pyramid—a pyramid blooming, spreading, and towering with such exuberance as, in the end, to eclipse the hero behind it. This ceremony over, seats were resumed, and we sat in dead silence, expectant of a speech.

I suppose five minutes might have elapsed, and the hush remained unbroken; ten—and there was no sound.

Many present began, doubtless, to wonder for what Monsieur waited: as well they might. Voiceless and viewless, stirless and wordless, he kept his station behind the pile of flowers.

At last there issued forth a voice, rather deep, as if it spoke out of a hollow:—

“ Est-ce là tout ? ”

Mademoiselle Zélie looked round.

“ You have all presented your bouquets ? ” inquired she of the pupils.

Yes; they had all given their nosegays from the eldest to the youngest, from the tallest to the



most diminutive. The senior mistress signified as much.

“Est-ce là tout?” was reiterated in an intonation which, deep before, had now descended some notes lower.

“Monsieur,” said Mademoiselle St. Pierre, rising, and this time speaking with her own sweet smile, “I have the honour to tell you that, with a single exception, every person in classe has offered her bouquet. For Meess Lucie, Monsieur will kindly make allowance; as a foreigner, she probably did not know our customs, or did not appreciate their significance. Meess Lucie has regarded this ceremony as too frivolous to be honoured by her observance.”

“Famous!” I muttered between my teeth; “you are no bad speaker, Zélie, when you begin.”

The answer vouchsafed to Mademoiselle St. Pierre from the estrade, was given in the gesticulation of a hand from behind the pyramid. This manual action seemed to deprecate words, to enjoin silence.

A form, ere long, followed the hand. Monsieur emerged from his eclipse; and producing himself upon the front of his estrade, and gazing straight and fixedly before him at a vast “mappe-monde”

covering the wall opposite, he demanded a third time, and now in really tragic tones—

“ Est-ce là tout ? ”

I might yet have made all right, by stepping forwards and slipping into his hand the ruddy little shell-box I, at that moment, held tight in my own. It was what I had fully purposed to do ; but, first, the comic side of Monsieur's behaviour had tempted me to delay, and now, Mademoiselle St. Pierre's affected interference provoked contumacity. The reader not having hitherto had any cause to ascribe to Miss Snowe's character the most distant pretension to perfection, will be scarcely surprised to learn that she felt too perverse to defend herself from any imputation the Parisienne might choose to insinuate : and besides, M. Paul was so tragic, and took my defection so seriously, he deserved to be vexed. I kept, then, both my box and my countenance, and sat insensate as any stone.

“ It is well ! ” dropped at length from the lips of M. Paul ; and having uttered this phrase, the shadow of some great paroxysm—the swell of wrath, scorn, resolve—passed over his brow, rippled his lips, and lined his cheeks. Gulping down all further comment, he launched into his customary “ discours.”

I can't at all remember what this "discours" was; I did not listen to it: the gulping-down process, the abrupt dismissal of his mortification or vexation, had given me a sensation which half-counteracted the ludicrous effect of the reiterated "Est-ce là tout?"

Towards the close of the speech there came a pleasing diversion; my attention was again amusingly arrested.

Owing to some little accidental movement—I think I dropped my thimble on the floor, and in stooping to regain it, hit the crown of my head against the sharp corner of my desk; which casualties (exasperating to me, by rights, if to anybody) naturally made a slight bustle—M. Paul became irritated, and dismissing his forced equanimity, and casting to the winds that dignity and self-control with which he never cared long to encumber himself, he broke forth into the strain best calculated to give him ease.

I don't know how, in the progress of his "discours," he had contrived to cross the channel, and land on British ground; but there I found him when I began to listen.

Casting a quick, cynical glance round the room—a glance which scathed, or was intended to scathe,

as it crossed me—he fell with fury upon “les Anglaises.”

Never have I heard English women handled as M. Paul that morning handled them: he spared nothing—neither their minds, morals, manners, nor personal appearance. I specially remember his abuse of their tall stature, their long necks, their thin arms, their slovenly dress, their pedantic education, their impious scepticism (!), their insufferable pride, their pretentious virtue: over which he ground his teeth malignantly, and looked as if, had he dared, he would have said singular things. Oh! he was spiteful, acrid, savage; and, as a natural consequence, detestably ugly.

“Little wicked venomous man!” thought I; “am I going to harass myself with fears of displeasing *you*, or hurting *your* feelings? No, indeed; you shall be indifferent to me, as the shabbiest bouquet in your pyramid.”

I grieve to say I could not quite carry out this resolution. For some time the abuse of England and the English found and left me stolid: I bore it some fifteen minutes stoically enough; but this hissing cockatrice was determined to sting, and he said such things at last—fastening not only upon our

women, but upon our greatest names and best men ; sullyng the shield of Britannia, and dabbling the union-jack in mud—that I *was* stung. With vicious relish he brought up the most spicy current continental historical falsehoods—than which nothing can be conceived more offensive. Zélie, and the whole class, became one grin of vindictive delight ; for it is curious to discover how these clowns of Labassecour secretly hate England. At last, I struck a sharp stroke on my desk, opened my lips, and let loose this cry :—

“Vive l’Angleterre, l’Histoire et les Héros ! A bas la France, la Fiction et les Faquins !”

The class was struck of a heap. I suppose they thought me mad. The professor put up his handkerchief, and fiendishly smiled into its folds. Little monster of malice ! He now thought he had got the victory, since he had made me angry. In a second he became good-humoured. With great blandness he resumed the subject of his flowers ; talked poetically and symbolically of their sweetness, perfume, purity, etcetera ; made Frenchified comparisons between the “jeunes filles” and the sweet blossoms before him ; paid Mademoiselle St. Pierre a very full-blown compliment on the superiority of



her bouquet; and ended by announcing that the first really, fine, mild, and balmy morning in spring, he intended to take the whole class out to breakfast in the country. "Such of the class, at least," he added, with emphasis, "as he could count amongst the number of his friends."

"Donc je n'y serai pas," declared I, involuntarily.

"Soit!" was his response, and, gathering his flowers in his arms, he flashed out of classe; while I, consigning my work, scissors, thimble, and the neglected little box, to my desk, swept up-stairs. I don't know whether *he* felt hot and angry, but I am free to confess that *I* did.

Yet with a strange evanescent anger, I had not sat an hour on the edge of my bed, picturing and repicturing his look, manner, words, ere I smiled at the whole scene. A little pang of regret I underwent that the box had not been offered. I had meant to gratify him. Fate would not have it so.

In the course of the afternoon, remembering that desks in classe were by no means inviolate repositories, and thinking that it was as well to secure the box, on account of the initials in the lid, P. C. D. E., for Paul Carl (or Carlos) David Emanuel—such was his full name—these foreigners

must always have a string of baptisms—I descended to the school-room.

It slept in holiday repose. The day-pupils were all gone home, the boarders were out walking, the teachers, except the surveillante of the week, were in town, visiting or shopping; the suite of divisions was vacant; so was the grande salle, with its huge solemn globe hanging in the midst, its pair of many-branched chandeliers, and its horizontal grand piano closed, silent, enjoying its mid-week Sabbath. I rather wondered to find the first classe door ajar; this room being usually locked when empty, and being then inaccessible to any save Madame Beck and myself, who possessed a duplicate key. I wondered still more, on approaching, to hear a vague movement as of life—a step, a chair stirred, a sound like the opening of a desk.

“It is only Madame Beck doing inspection duty,” was the conclusion following a moment’s reflection. The partially-opened door gave opportunity for assurance on this point. I looked. Behold! not the inspecting garb of Madame Beck—the shawl and the clean cap—but the coat, and the close-shorn, dark head of a man. This person occupied my chair; his olive hand held my desk

open, his nose was lost to view amongst my papers. His back was towards me, but there could not be a moment's question about identity. Already was the attire of ceremony discarded : the cherished and ink-stained paletot was resumed ; the perverse bonnet-grec lay on the floor, as if just dropped from the hand, culpably busy.

Now I knew, and had long known, that that hand of M. Emanuel's was on intimate terms with my desk ; that it raised and lowered the lid, ransacked and arranged the contents, almost as familiarly as my own. The fact was not dubious, nor did he wish it to be so : he left signs of each visit palpable and unmistakeable ; hitherto, however, I had never caught him in the act : watch as I would, I could not detect the hours and moments of his coming. I saw the brownie's work, in exercises left overnight full of faults, and found next morning carefully corrected : I profited by his capricious goodwill in loans full welcome and refreshing. Between a sallow dictionary and worn-out grammar would magically grow a fresh interesting new work, or a classic, mellow and sweet in its ripe age. Out of my work-basket would laughingly peep a romance, under it would lurk the pamphlet, the magazine,

whence last evening's reading had been extracted. Impossible to doubt the source whence these treasures flowed : had there been no other indication, one condemning and traitor peculiarity common to them all, settled the question—*they smelt of cigars*. This was very shocking, of course : *I* thought so at first, and used to open the window with some bustle, to air my desk, and with fastidious finger and thumb, to hold the peccant brochures forth to the purifying breeze. I was cured of that formality suddenly. Monsieur caught me at it one day, understood the inference, instantly relieved my hand of its burden, and, in another moment, would have thrust the same into the glowing stove. It chanced to be a book, on the perusal of which I was bent ; so for once I proved as decided and quicker than himself, recaptured the spoil, and—having saved this volume—never hazarded a second. With all this, I had never yet been able to arrest in his visits the freakish, friendly, cigar-loving phantom.

But now at last I had him : there he was—the very brownie himself ; and there, curling from his lips, was the pale blue breath of his Indian darling : he was smoking into my desk : it might well betray him. Provoked at this particular, and yet pleased

to surprise him—pleased, that is, with the mixed feeling of the housewife who discovers at last her strange elfin ally busy in the dairy at the untimely churn—I softly stole forward, stood behind him, bent with precaution over his shoulder.

My heart smote me to see that—after this morning's hostility, after my seeming remissness, after the puncture experienced by his feelings, and the ruffling undergone by his temper—he, all-willing to forget and forgive, had brought me a couple of handsome volumes, of which the title and authorship were guarantees for interest. Now, as he sat bending above the desk, he was stirring up its contents; but with gentle and careful hand: disarranging indeed, but not harming. My heart smote me: as I bent over him, as he sat unconscious, doing me what good he could, and I daresay not feeling towards me unkindly, my morning's anger quite melted: I did not dislike Professor Emanuel.

I think he heard me breathe. He turned suddenly: his temperament was nervous, yet he never started, and seldom changed colour; there was something hardy about him.

“I thought you were gone into town with the



other teachers," said he, taking a grim gripe of his self-possession, which half escaped him—"It is as well you are not. Do you think I care for being caught? Not I. I often visit your desk."

"Monsieur, I know it."

"You find a brochure or a tome now and then; but you don't read them, because they have passed under this?"—touching his cigar.

"They have, and are no better for the process, but I read them."

"Without pleasure?"

"Monsieur must not be contradicted."

"Do you like them, or any of them?—are they acceptable?"

"Monsieur has seen me reading them a hundred times, and knows I have not so many recreations as to undervalue those he provides."

"I mean well; and, if you see that I mean well, and derive some little amusement from my efforts, why can we not be friends?"

"A fatalist would say—because we cannot."

"This morning," he continued, "I awoke in a bright mood, and came into classe happy; you spoiled my day."

"No, Monsieur, only an hour or two of it, and that unintentionally."

"Unintentionally! No. It was my fête-day; everybody wished me happiness but you. The little children of the third division gave each her knot of violets, lisped each her congratulation: you—nothing. Not a bud, leaf, whisper—not a glance. Was this unintentional?"

"I meant no harm."

"Then you really did not know our custom? You were unprepared? You would willingly have laid out a few centimes on a flower to give me pleasure, had you been aware that it was expected? Say so, and all is forgotten, and the pain soothed."

"I *did* know that it was expected: I *was* prepared; yet I laid out no centimes on flowers."

"It is well—you do right to be honest. I should almost have hated you, had you flattered and lied. Better declare at once—'Paul Carl Emanuel—je te déteste, mon garçon!'—than smile an interest, look an affection, and be false and cold at heart. False and cold, I don't think you are; but you have made a great mistake in life, that I believe: I think your judgment is warped—that you are indifferent where you ought to be grateful—and perhaps de-

voted and infatuated, where you ought to be cool as your name. Don't suppose that I wish you to have a passion for me, Mademoiselle; Dieu vous en garde! What do you start for? Because I said passion? Well, I say it again. There is such a word, and there is such a thing—though not within these walls, thank Heaven! You are no child that one should not speak of what exists; but I only uttered the word—the thing, I assure you, is alien to my whole life and views. It died in the past—in the present it lies buried—its grave is deep-dug, well-heaped, and many winters old: in the future there will be a resurrection, as I believe to my soul's consolation; but all will then be changed—form and feeling: the mortal will have put on immortality—it will rise, not for earth, but heaven. All I say to *you*, Miss Lucy Snowe, is—that you ought to treat Professor Paul Emanuel decently."

I could not, and did not, contradict such a sentiment.

"Tell me," he pursued, "when it is *your* fête-day, and I will not grudge a few centimes for a small offering."

"You will be like me, monsieur: this cost more than a few centimes, and I did not grudge its price."

And taking from the open desk the little box, I put it into his hand.

"It lay ready in my lap this morning," I continued; "and if Monsieur had been rather more patient, and Mademoiselle St. Pierre less interfering—perhaps I should say, too, if *I* had been calmer and wiser—I should have given it then."

He looked at the box: I saw its clear warm tint and bright azure circlet, pleased his eye. I told him to open it.

"My initials!" said he, indicating the letters in the lid. "Who told you I was called Carl David?"

"A little bird, monsieur."

"Does it fly from me to you? Then one can tie a message under its wing when needful?"

He took out the chain—a trifle indeed as to value, but glossy with silk and sparkling with beads. He liked that too—admired it artlessly, like a child.

"For me?"

"Yes, for you."

"This is the thing you were working at last night?"

"The same."

"You finished it this morning?"

"I did."

"You commenced it with the intention that it should be mine?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And offered on my fête-day?"

"Yes."

"This purpose continued as you wove it?"

Again I assented.

"Then it is not necessary that I should cut out any portion—saying, this part is not mine; it was plaited under the idea and for the adornment of another?"

"By no means. It is neither necessary, nor would it be just."

"This object is *all* mine?"

"That object is yours entirely."

Straightway Monsieur opened his paletot, arranged the guard splendidly across his chest, displaying as much and suppressing as little as he could: for he had no notion of concealing what he admired and thought decorative. As to the box, he pronounced it a superb bonbonnière—he was fond of bon-bons, by the way—and as he always liked to share with others what pleased himself, he would give his "dragées" as freely as he lent his books. Amongst the kind brownie's gifts left in my desk, I forgot to



enumerate many a paper of chocolate comfits. His tastes in these matters were southern, and what we think infantine. His simple lunch consisted frequently of a "brioche," which, as often as not, he shared with some child of the third division.

"À présent c'est un fait accompli," said he, re-adjusting his paletot; and we had no more words on the subject. After looking over the two volumes he had brought, and cutting away some pages with his penknife (he generally pruned before lending his books, especially if they were novels, and sometimes I was a little provoked at the severity of his censorship, the retrenchments interrupting the narrative), he rose, politely touched his bonnet-grec, and bade me a civil good day.

"We are friends now," thought I, "till the next time we quarrel."

We *might* have quarrelled again that very same evening, but, wonderful to relate! failed, for once, to make the most of our opportunity.

Contrary to all expectation, M. Paul arrived at the study-hour. Having seen so much of him in the morning, we did not look for his presence at night. No sooner were we seated at lessons, however, than he appeared. I own I was glad to see

him, so glad that I could not help greeting his arrival with a smile ; and when he made his way to the same seat about which so serious a misunderstanding had formerly arisen, I took good care not to make too much room for him ; he watched with a jealous, side-long look, to see whether I shrank away, but I did not, though the bench was a little crowded. I was losing the early impulse to recoil from M. Paul. Habituated to the paletot and bonnet-grec, the neighbourhood of these garments seemed no longer uncomfortable or very formidable. I did not now sit restrained, “*asphyxiée*” (as he used to say) at his side ; I stirred when I wished to stir, coughed when it was necessary, even yawned when I was tired—did, in short, what I pleased, blindly reliant upon his indulgence. Nor did my temerity, this evening at least, meet the punishment it perhaps merited ; he was both indulgent and good-natured ; not a cross glance shot from his eyes, not a hasty word left his lips. Till the very close of the evening, he did not indeed address me at all, yet I felt, somehow, that he was full of friendliness. Silence is of different kinds, and breathes different meanings ; no words could inspire a pleasanter content than did M. Paul’s wordless presence. When the

tray came in, and the bustle of supper commenced, he just said, as he retired, that he wished me a good night and sweet dreams; and a good night and sweet dreams I had.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## M. PAUL.

YET the reader is advised not to be in any hurry with his kindly conclusions, or to suppose, with an over-hasty charity, that from that day M. Paul became a changed character—easy to live with, and no longer apt to flash danger and discomfort round him.

No; he was naturally a little man, of unreasonable moods. When over-wrought, which he often was, he became acutely irritable; and, besides, his veins were dark with a livid bella-donna tincture, the essence of jealousy. I do not mean merely the tender jealousy of the heart, but that sterner, narrower sentiment whose seat is in the head.

I used to think, as I sat looking at M. Paul, while he was knitting his brow or protruding his lip over some exercise of mine, which had not as

many faults as he wished (for he liked me to commit faults: a knot of blunders was sweet to him as a cluster of nuts), that he had points of resemblance to Napoleon Bonaparte. I think so still.

In a shameless disregard of magnanimity, he resembled the great Emperor. M. Paul would have quarrelled with twenty learned women, would have unblushingly carried on a system of petty bickering and recrimination with a whole capital of coteries, never troubling himself about loss or lack of dignity. He would have exiled fifty Madame de Staels, if they had annoyed, offended, out-rivalled, or opposed him.

I well remember a hot episode of his with a certain Madame Panache—a lady temporarily employed by Madame Beck to give lessons in history. She was clever—that is, she knew a good deal; and, besides, thoroughly possessed the art of making the most of what she knew; of words and confidence she held unlimited command. Her personal appearance was far from destitute of advantages; I believe many people would have pronounced her “a fine woman;” and yet there were points in her robust and ample attractions, as well as in her bustling and demonstrative



presence, which, it appeared, the nice and capricious tastes of M. Paul could not away with. The sound of her voice, echoing through the carré, would put him into a strange taking; her long, free step—almost stride—along the corridor, would often make him snatch up his papers and decamp on the instant.

With malicious intent he bethought himself, one day, to intrude on her class; as quick as lightning he gathered her method of instruction; it differed from a pet plan of his own. With little ceremony, and less courtesy, he pointed out what he termed her errors. Whether he expected submission and attention, I know not; he met an acrid opposition, accompanied by a round reprimand for his certainly unjustifiable interference.

Instead of withdrawing with dignity, as he might still have done, he threw down the gauntlet of defiance. Madame Panache, bellicose as a Penthesilea, picked it up in a minute. She snapped her fingers in the intermeddler's face; she rushed upon him with a storm of words. M. Emanuel was eloquent; but Madame Panache was voluble. A system of fierce antagonism ensued. Instead of laughing in his sleeve at his fair foe, with all her sore amour

propre and loud self-assertion, M. Paul detested her with intense seriousness ; he honoured her with his earnest fury ; he pursued her vindictively and implacably, refusing to rest peaceably in his bed, to derive due benefit from his meals, or even serenely to relish his cigar, till she was fairly rooted out of the establishment. The professor conquered, but I cannot say that the laurels of this victory shadowed gracefully his temples. Once I ventured to hint as much. To my great surprise he allowed that I might be right, but averred that when brought into contact with either men or women of the coarse, self-complacent quality, whereof Madame Panache was a specimen, he had no control over his own passions ; an unspeakable and active aversion impelled him to a war of extermination.

Three months afterwards, hearing that his vanquished foe had met with reverses, and was likely to be really distressed for want of employment, he forgot his hatred, and, alike active in good and evil, he moved heaven and earth till he found her a place. Upon her coming to make up former differences, and thank him for his recent kindness, the old voice—a little loud—the old manner—a

little forward—so acted upon him that in ten minutes he started up and bowed her, or rather himself, out of the room, in a transport of nervous irritation.

To pursue a somewhat audacious parallel, in a love of power, in an eager grasp after supremacy, M. Emanuel was like Bonaparte. He was a man not always to be submitted to. Sometimes it was needful to resist; it was right to stand still, to look up into his eyes and tell him that his requirements went beyond reason—that his absolutism verged on tyranny.

The dawnings, the first developments of peculiar talent appearing within his range, and under his rule, curiously excited, even disturbed him. He watched its struggle into life with a scowl; he held back his hand—perhaps said, “Come on if you have strength,” but would not aid the birth.

When the pang and peril of the first conflict were over, when the breath of life was drawn, when he saw the lungs expand and contract, when he felt the heart beat and discovered life in the eye, he did not yet offer to foster.

“Prove yourself true ere I cherish you,” was his ordinance; and how difficult he made that proof!

What thorns and briars, what flints, he strewed in the path of feet not inured to rough travel! He watched tearlessly—ordeals that he exacted should be passed through—fearlessly. He followed foot-prints that, as they approached the bourne, were sometimes marked in blood—followed them grimly, holding the austere police-watch over the pain-pressed pilgrim. And when at last he allowed a rest, before slumber might close the eyelids, he opened those same lids wide, with pitiless finger and thumb, and gazed deep through the pupil and the irids into the brain, into the heart, to search if Vanity, or Pride, or Falsehood, in any of its subtlest forms, was discoverable in the furthest recess of existence. If, at last, he let the neophyte sleep, it was but a moment; he woke him suddenly up to apply new tests; he sent him on irksome errands when he was staggering with weariness; he tried the temper, the sense, and the health; and it was only when every severest test had been applied and endured, when the most corrosive aquafortis had been used, and failed to tarnish the ore, that he admitted it genuine and, still in clouded silence, stamped it with his deep brand of approval.

I speak not ignorant of these evils.

Till the date at which the last chapter closes, M. Paul had not been my professor—he had not given me lessons, but about that time, accidentally hearing me one day acknowledge an ignorance of some branch of education (I think it was arithmetic) which would have disgraced a charity-school-boy, as he very truly remarked, he took me in hand, examined me first, found me, I need not say, abundantly deficient, gave me some books and appointed me some tasks.

He did this at first with pleasure, indeed with unconcealed exultation, condescending to say that he believed I was “*bonne et pas trop faible*” (*i. e.* well enough disposed, and not wholly destitute of parts) but, owing he supposed to adverse circumstances, “as yet in a state of wretchedly imperfect mental development.”

The beginning of all efforts has indeed with me been marked by a preternatural imbecility. I never could, even in forming a common acquaintance, assert or prove a claim to average quickness. A depressing and difficult passage has prefaced every new page I have turned in life.

So long as this passage lasted, M. Paul was very kind, very good, very forbearing; he saw the sharp



pain inflicted, and felt the weighty humiliation imposed by my own sense of incapacity; and words can hardly do justice to his tenderness and helpfulness. His own eyes would moisten, when tears of shame and effort clouded mine; burdened as he was with work, he would steal half his brief space of recreation to give to me.

But, strange grief! when that heavy and overcast dawn began at last to yield to day; when my faculties began to struggle themselves free, and my time of energy and fulfilment came; when I voluntarily doubled, trebled, quadrupled the tasks he set, to please him as I thought, his kindness became sternness; the light changed in his eyes from a beam to a spark; he fretted, he opposed, he curbed me imperiously; the more I did, the harder I worked, the less he seemed content. Sarcasms of which the severity amazed and puzzled me, harassed my ears; then flowed out the bitterest inuendoes against the "pride of intellect." I was vaguely threatened with, I know not what doom, if I ever trespassed the limits proper to my sex, and conceived a contraband appetite for unfeminine knowledge. Alas! I had no such appetite. What I loved, it joyed me by any effort to content; but the

noble hunger for science in the abstract—the godlike thirst after discovery—these feelings were known to me but by briefest flashes.

Yet, when M. Paul sneered at me, I wanted to possess them more fully; his injustice stirred in me ambitious wishes—it imparted a strong stimulus—it gave wings to aspiration.

In the beginning, before I had penetrated to motives, that uncomprehended sneer of his made my heart ache, but by-and-by it only warmed the blood in my veins, and sent added action to my pulses. Whatever my powers—feminine or the contrary—God had given them, and I felt resolute to be ashamed of no faculty of His bestowal.

The combat was very sharp for a time. I seemed to have lost M. Paul's affection; he treated me strangely. In his most unjust moments he would insinuate that I had deceived him when I appeared, what he called "*faible*"—that is, incompetent; he said I had feigned a false incapacity. Again, he would turn suddenly round and accuse me of the most far-fetched imitations and impossible plagiarisms, asserting that I had extracted the pith out of books I had not so much as heard of—and over the perusal of which I should infallibly

have fallen down in a sleep as deep as that of Eutychus.

Once, upon his preferring such an accusation, I turned upon him—I rose against him. Gathering an armful of his books out of my desk, I filled my apron and poured them in a heap upon his estrade, at his feet.

“Take them away, M. Paul,” I said, “and teach me no more. I never asked to be made learned, and you compel me to feel very profoundly that learning is not happiness.”

And returning to my desk, I laid my head on my arms, nor would I speak to him for two days afterwards. He pained and chagrined me. His affection had been very sweet and dear—a pleasure new and incomparable : now that this seemed withdrawn, I cared not for his lessons.

The books, however, were not taken away ; they were all restored with careful hand to their places, and he came as usual to teach me. He made his peace somehow—too readily, perhaps ; I ought to have stood out longer, but when he looked kind and good, and held out his hand with amity, memory refused to reproduce with due force his oppressive moments. And then, reconciliation is always sweet !

On a certain morning a message came from my godmother, inviting me to attend some notable lecture to be delivered in the same public rooms before described. Dr. John had brought the message himself, and delivered it verbally to Rosine, who had not scrupled to follow the steps of M. Emanuel, then passing to the first classe, and, in his presence, stand “carrément” before my desk, hand in apron-pocket, and rehearse the same, saucily and aloud, concluding with the words—

“Qu’il est vraiment beau, mademoiselle, ce jeune docteur ! Quels yeux—quel regard ! Tenez ! J’en ai le cœur tout ému !”

When she was gone, my professor demanded of me why I suffered “cette fille effrontée, cette créature sans pudeur,” to address me in such terms.

I had no pacifying answer to give. The terms were precisely such as Rosine—a young lady in whose skull the organs of reverence and reserve were not largely developed—was in the constant habit of using. Besides, what she said about the young doctor was true enough. Graham *was* handsome ; he *had* fine eyes and a thrilling glance. An observation to that effect actually formed itself into sound on my lips.

“ Elle ne dit que la vérité,” I said.

“ Ah ! vous trouvez ? ”

“ Mais, sans doute.”

The lesson to which we had that day to submit was such as to make us very glad when it terminated. At its close, the released pupils rushed out, half-trembling, half-exultant. I, too, was going. A mandate to remain arrested me. I muttered that I wanted some fresh air sadly—the stove was in a glow, the classe overheated, An inexorable voice merely recommended silence ; and this salamander—for whom no room ever seemed too hot—sitting down between my desk and the stove—a situation in which he ought to have felt broiled, but did not—proceeded to confront me with—a Greek quotation !

In M. Emanuel’s soul rankled a chronic suspicion that I knew both Greek and Latin. As monkies are said to have the power of speech if they would but use it, and are reported to conceal this faculty in fear of its being turned to their detriment, so to me was ascribed a fund of knowledge which I was supposed criminally and craftily to conceal. The privileges of a “ classical education,” it was insinuated, had been mine ; on flowers of Hymettus I



had revelled; a golden store, hived in memory, now silently sustained my efforts, and privily nurtured my wits.

A hundred expedients did M. Paul employ to surprise my secret—to wheedle, to threaten, to startle it out of me. Sometimes he placed Greek and Latin books in my way, and then watched me, as Joan of Arc's jailors tempted her with the warrior's accoutrements, and lay in wait for the issue. Again he quoted I know not what authors and passages, and while rolling out their sweet and sounding lines (the classic tones fell very musically from his lips—for he had a good voice—remarkable for compass, modulation, and matchless expression), he would fix on me a vigilant, piercing, and often malicious eye. It was evident he sometimes expected great demonstrations; they never occurred, however; not comprehending, of course I could neither be charmed nor annoyed.

Baffled—almost angry—he still clung to his fixed idea; my susceptibilities were pronounced marble—my face a mask. It appeared as if he could not be brought to accept the homely truth, and take me for what I was: men, and women too, must have delusion of some sort; if not made ready to

their hand, they will invent exaggeration for themselves.

At moments I *did* wish that his suspicions had been better founded. There were times when I would have given my right hand to possess the treasures he ascribed to me. He deserved condign punishment for his testy crotchets. I could have gloried in bringing home to him his worst apprehensions astoundingly realized. I could have exulted to burst on his vision, confront and confound his "lunettes," one blaze of acquirements. Oh! why did nobody undertake to make me clever while I was young enough to learn, that I might, by one grand, sudden, inhuman revelation—one cold, cruel, overwhelming triumph—have for ever crushed the mocking spirit out of Paul Carl David Emanuel!

Alas! no such feat was in my power. To-day, as usual, his quotations fell ineffectual: he soon shifted his ground.

"Women of intellect" was his next theme: here he was at home. A "woman of intellect," it appeared, was a sort of "*lusus naturæ*," a luckless accident, a thing for which there was neither place nor use in creation, wanted neither as wife nor

worker. Beauty anticipated her in the first office. He believed in his soul that lovely, placid, and passive feminine mediocrity was the only pillow on which manly thought and sense could find rest for its aching temples; and as to work, male mind alone could work to any good practical result—hein?

This “hein?” was a note of interrogation intended to draw from me contradiction or objection. However, I only said—

“Cela ne me regarde pas: je ne m’en soucie pas;” and presently added—“May I go, monsieur? They have rung the bell for the second “déjeuner” (*i. e.*, luncheon).

“What of that? You are not hungry?”

“Indeed I was,” I said; “I had had nothing since breakfast, at seven, and should have nothing till dinner, at five, if I missed this bell.”

“Well, he was in the same plight, but I might share with him.”

And he broke in two the “brioche,” intended for his own refreshment, and gave me half. Truly his bark was worse than his bite; but the really formidable attack was yet to come. While eating his cake, I could not forbear expressing my secret

wish that I really knew all of which he accused me.

“Did I sincerely feel myself to be an ignoramus?” he asked, in a softened tone.

If I had replied meekly by an unqualified affirmative, I believe he would have stretched out his hand, and we should have been friends on the spot, but I answered :

“Not exactly. I am ignorant, monsieur, in the knowledge you ascribe to me, but I *sometimes*, not *always*, feel a knowledge of my own.”

“What did I mean?” he inquired, sharply.

Unable to answer this question in a breath, I evaded it by change of subject. He had now finished his half of the brioche : feeling sure that on so trifling a fragment he could not have satisfied his appetite, as indeed I had not appeased mine, and inhaling the fragrance of baked apples afar from the refectory, I ventured to inquire whether he did not also perceive that agreeable odour. He confessed that he did. I said if he would let me out by the garden-door, and permit me just to run across the court, I would fetch him a plateful ; and added that I believed they were excellent, as Goton had a very good method of baking, or rather stewing fruit,

putting in a little spice, sugar, and a glass or two of vin blanc—might I go?

“Petite gourmande!” said he, smiling. “I have not forgotten how pleased you were with the pâté à la crème I once gave you, and you know very well, at this moment, that to fetch the apples for me will be the same as getting them for yourself. Go, then, but come back quickly.”

And at last he liberated me on parole. My own plan was to go and return with speed and good faith, to put the plate in at the door, and then to vanish incontinent, leaving all consequences for future settlement.

That intolerably keen instinct of his seemed to have anticipated my scheme; he met me at the threshold, hurried me into the room, and fixed me in a minute in my former seat. Taking the plate of fruit from my hand, he divided the portion intended only for himself, and ordered me to eat my share. I complied with no good grace, and vexed, I suppose, by my reluctance, he opened a masked and dangerous battery. All he had yet said, I could count as mere sound and fury, signifying nothing; not so of the present attack.

It consisted in an unreasonable proposition with



which he had before afflicted me: namely, that on the next public examination-day I should engage—foreigner as I was—to take my place on the first form of first-class pupils, and with them improvise a composition in French, on any subject any spectator might dictate, without benefit of grammar or lexicon.

I knew what the result of such an experiment would be. I, to whom nature had denied the impromptu faculty; who, in public, was by nature a cypher; whose time of mental activity, even when alone, was not under the meridian sun; who needed the fresh silence of morning, or the recluse peace of evening, to win from the Creative Impulse one evidence of his presence, one proof of his force; I, with whom that Impulse was the most intractable, the most capricious, the most maddening of masters (him before me always excepted)—a deity, which sometimes, under circumstances apparently propitious, would not speak when questioned, would not hear when appealed to, would not, when sought, be found; but would stand, all cold, all indurated, all granite, a dark Baal with carven lips and blank eye-balls, and breast like the stone face of a tomb; and again, suddenly, at some turn, some sound,

some long-trembling sob of the wind, at some rushing past of an unseen stream of electricity, the irrational demon would wake unsolicited, would stir strangely alive, would rush from its pedestal like a perturbed Dagon, calling to its votary for a sacrifice, whatever the hour—to its victim for some blood or some breath, whatever the circumstance or scene—rousing its priest, treacherously promising vaticination, perhaps filling its temple with a strange hum of oracles, but sure to give half the significance to fateful winds, and grudging to the desperate listener even a miserable remnant—yielding it sordidly, as though each word had been a drop of the deathless ichor of its own dark veins. And this tyrant I was to compel into bondage, and make it improvise a theme, on a school estrade, between a Mathilde and a Coralie, under the eye of a Madame Beck, for the pleasure and to the inspiration of a bourgeois of Labassecour!

Upon this argument M. Paul and I did battle more than once—strong battle, with confused noise of demand and rejection, exaction and repulse.

On this particular day I was soundly rated. “The obstinacy of my whole sex” it seems, was concentrated in me; I had an “orgueil de diable.”

I feared to fail, forsooth! What did it matter whether I failed or not? Who was I that I should not fail like my betters? It would do me good to fail. He wanted to see me worsted (I knew he did), and one minute he paused to take breath.

“Would I speak now and be tractable?”

“Never would I be tractable in this matter. Law itself should not compel me. I would pay a fine, or undergo an imprisonment, rather than write for a show and to order, perched up on a platform.”

“Could softer motives influence me? Would I yield for friendship’s sake?”

“Not a whit, not a hair-breadth. No form of friendship under the sun had a right to exact such a concession. No true friendship would harass me thus.”

He supposed then (with a sneer — M. Paul could sneer supremely, curling his lip, opening his nostrils, contracting his eyelids)—he supposed there was but one form of appeal to which I would listen, and of that form it was not for him to make use.

“Under certain persuasions, from certain quarters, *je vous vois d’ici*,” said he, “eagerly subscribing to the sacrifice, passionately arming for the effort.”

“ Making a simpleton, a warning, and an example of myself, before a hundred and fifty of the ‘ papas’ and ‘ mamans’ of Villette.”

And here, losing patience, I broke out afresh with a cry that I wanted to be liberated, to get out to the air—I was almost in a fever.

“ Chut !” said the inexorable, “ this was a mere pretext to run away : *he* was not hot, with the stove close at his back ; how could I suffer, thoroughly screened by his person ?”

“ I did not understand his constitution. I knew nothing of the natural history of salamanders. For my own part, I was a phlegmatic islander, and sitting in an oven did not agree with me ; at least, might I step to the well, and get a glass of water—the sweet apples had made me thirsty ?”

“ If that was all, he would do my errand.”

He went to fetch the water. Of course, with a door only on the latch behind me, I lost not my opportunity. Ere his return, his half-worried prey had escaped.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE DRYAD.

THE spring was advancing, and the weather had turned suddenly warm. This change of temperature brought with it for me, as probably for many others, temporary decrease of strength. Slight exertion at this time left me overcome with fatigue—sleepless nights entailed languid days.

One Sunday afternoon, having walked the distance of half a league to the Protestant church, I came back weary and exhausted; and taking refuge in my solitary sanctuary, the first classe, I was glad to sit down, and to make of my desk a pillow for my arms and head.

Awhile I listened to the lullaby of bees humming in the berceau, and watched, through the glass door, and the tender, lightly-strewn spring foliage, Madame Beck and a gay party of friends, whom she



had entertained that day at dinner after morning-mass, walking in the centre-alley under orchard boughs dressed at this season in blossom, and wearing a colouring as pure and warm as mountain-snow at sun-rise.

My principal attraction towards this group of guests lay, I remember, in one figure—that of a handsome young girl whom I had seen before as a visitor at Madame Beck’s, and of whom I had been vaguely told that she was a “filleule,” or god-daughter, of M. Emanuel’s, and that between her mother, or aunt, or some other female relation of hers, and the professor—had existed of old a special friendship. M. Paul was not of the holiday band to-day, but I had seen this young girl with him ere now, and as far as distant observation could enable me to judge, she seemed to enjoy with him the frank ease of a ward with an indulgent guardian. I had seen her run up to him, put her arm through his and hang upon him. Once, when she did so, a curious sensation had struck through me—a disagreeable anticipatory sensation—one of the family of presentiments, I suppose—but I refused to analyze or dwell upon it. While watching this girl, Made-moiselle Sauveur by name, and following the gleam

of her bright silk robe (she was always richly dressed, for she was said to be wealthy) through the flowers and the glancing leaves of tender emerald, my eyes became dazzled—they closed; my lassitude, the warmth of the day, the hum of bees and birds, all lulled me, and at last I slept.

Two hours stole over me. Ere I woke, the sun had declined out of sight behind the towering houses, the garden and the room were gray, bees had gone homeward, and the flowers were closing; the party of guests, too, had vanished; each alley was void.

On waking, I felt much at ease—not chill, as I ought to have been after sitting so still for at least two hours; my cheek and arms were not benumbed by pressure against the hard desk. No wonder. Instead of the bare wood on which I had laid them, I found a thick shawl, carefully folded, substituted for support, and another shawl (both taken from the corridor where such things hung) wrapped warmly round me.

Who had done this? Who was my friend? Which of the teachers? Which of the pupils? None, except St. Pierre, was inimical to me; but which of them had the art, the thought, the habit, of

benefiting thus tenderly? Which of them had a step so quiet, a hand so gentle, but I should have heard or felt her, if she had approached or touched me in a day-sleep?

As to Ginevra Fanshawe, that bright young creature was not gentle at all, and would certainly have pulled me out of my chair, if she had meddled in the matter. I said at last: "It is Madame Beck's doing; she has come in, seen me asleep, and thought I might take cold. She considers me a useful machine, answering well the purpose for which it was hired; so would not have me needlessly injured. And now," methought, "I'll take a walk; the evening is fresh, and not very chill."

So I opened the glass door and stepped into the *berceau*.

I went to my own alley: had it been dark, or even dusk, I should hardly have ventured there, for I had not yet forgotten the curious illusion of vision (if illusion it were) experienced in that place some months ago. But a ray of the setting sun burnished still the gray crown of Jean Baptiste; nor had all the birds of the garden yet vanished into their nests amongst the tufted shrubs and thick wall-ivy. I paced up and down, thinking almost the same

thoughts I had pondered that night when I buried my glass jar—how I should make some advance in life, take another step towards an independent position; for this train of reflection, though not lately pursued, had never by me been wholly abandoned; and whenever a certain eye was averted from me, and a certain countenance grew dark with unkindness and injustice, into that track of speculation did I at once strike; so that, little by little, I had laid half a plan.

“Living costs little,” said I to myself, “in this economical town of Villette, where people are more sensible than I understand they are in dear old England—ininitely less worried about appearance, and less emulous of display—where nobody is in the least ashamed to be quite as homely and saving as he finds convenient. House-rent, in a prudently chosen situation, need not be high. When I shall have saved one thousand francs, I will take a tenement with one large room, and two or three smaller ones, furnish the first with a few benches and desks, a black tableau, an estrade for myself; upon it a chair and table, with a sponge and some white chalks; begin with taking day-pupils, and so work my way upwards. Madame Beck’s commencement

was—as I have often heard her say—from no higher starting-point, and where is she now? All these premises and this garden are hers, bought with her money; she has a competency already secured for old age, and a flourishing establishment under her direction, which will furnish a career for her children.

Courage, Lucy Snowe! With self-denial and economy now, and steady exertion by-and-by, an object in life need not fail you. Venture not to complain that such an object is too selfish, too limited, and lacks interest; be content to labour for independence until you have proved, by winning that prize, your right to look higher. But afterwards, is there nothing more for me in life—no true home—nothing to be dearer to me than myself, and by its paramount preciousness, to draw from me better things than I care to culture for myself only? Nothing, at whose feet I can willingly lay down the whole burden of human egotism, and gloriously take up the nobler charge of labouring and living for others?” I suppose, Lucy Snowe, the orb of your life is not to be so rounded; for you the crescent-phase must suffice. Very good. I see a huge mass of my fellow-creatures in no better circum-



stances. I see that a great many men, and more women, hold their span of life on conditions of denial and privation. I find no reason why I should be of the few favoured. I believe in some blending of hope and sunshine sweetening the worst lots. I believe that this life is not all; neither the beginning nor the end. I believe while I tremble; I trust while I weep.

So this subject is done with. It is right to look our life - accounts bravely in the face now and then, and settle them honestly. And he is a poor self-swindler who lies to himself while he reckons the items, and sets down under the head—happiness that which is misery. Call anguish—anguish, and despair—despair; write both down in strong characters with a resolute pen: you will the better pay your debt to Doom. Falsify; insert “privilege” where you should have written “pain;” and see if your mighty creditor will allow the fraud to pass, or accept the coin with which you would cheat him. Offer to the strongest—if the darkest angel of God’s host—water, when he has asked blood—will he take it? Not a whole pale sea for one red drop. I settled another account.

Pausing before Methusaleh—the giant and patri-

arch of the garden—and leaning my brow against his knotty trunk, my foot rested on the stone sealing the small sepulchre at his root; and I recalled the passage of feeling therein buried. I recalled Dr. John; my warm affection for him; my faith in his excellence; my delight in his grace. What was become of that curious one-sided friendship which was half marble and half life; only on one hand truth, and on the other perhaps a jest?

Was this feeling dead? I do not know, but it was buried. Sometimes I thought the tomb unquiet, and dreamed strangely of disturbed earth, and of hair, still golden and living, obtruded through coffin-chinks.

Had I been too hasty? I used to ask myself; and this question would occur with a cruel sharpness after some brief chance interview with Dr. John. He had still such kind looks, such a warm hand; his voice still kept so pleasant a tone for my name; I never liked “Lucy” so well as when he uttered it. But I learned in time that this benignity, this cordiality, this music, belonged in no shape to me: it was a part of himself; it was the honey of his temper; it was the balm of his mellow mood; he imparted it, as the ripe fruit rewards with sweet-

ness the rifling bee; he diffused it about him, as sweet plants shed their perfume. Does the nectarine love either the bee or bird it feeds? Is the sweetbriar enamoured of the air?

“Good night, Dr. John; you are good, you are beautiful; but you are not mine. Good night, and God bless you!”

Thus I closed my musings. “Good night” left my lips in sound; I heard the two words spoken, and then I heard an echo—quite close.

“Good night, mademoiselle; or, rather, good evening—the sun is scarce set; I hope you slept well?”

I started, but was only discomposed a moment; I knew the voice and speaker.

“Slept, monsieur! When? where?”

“You may well inquire when—where. It seems you turn day into night, and choose a desk for a pillow; rather hard lodging ——?”

“It was softened for me, monsieur, while I slept. That unseen, gift-bringing thing which haunts my desk, remembered me. No matter how I fell asleep; I awoke pillowed and covered.”

“Did the shawls keep you warm?”

“Very warm. Do you ask thanks for them?”

“ No. You looked pale in your slumbers ; are you home-sick ? ”

“ To be home-sick, one must have a home ; which I have not. ”

“ Then you have more need of a careful friend. I scarcely know any one, Miss Lucy, who needs a friend more absolutely than you ; your very faults imperatively require it. You want so much checking, regulating, and keeping down. ”

This idea of “ keeping down ” never left M. Paul’s head ; the most habitual subjugation would, in my case, have failed to relieve him of it. No matter ; what did it signify ? I listened to him, and did not trouble myself to be too submissive ; his occupation would have been gone, had I left him nothing to “ keep down. ”

“ You need watching, and watching over, ” he pursued ; “ and it is well for you that I see this, and do my best to discharge both duties. I watch you and others pretty closely, pretty constantly, nearer and oftener than you or they think. Do you see that window with a light in it ? ”

He pointed to a lattice in one of the college boarding-houses.

“ That, ” said he, “ is a room I have hired, nomi-

nally for a study—virtually for a post of observation. There I sit and read for hours together : it is my way—my taste. My book is this garden ; its contents are human nature—female human nature. I know you all by heart. Ah ! I know you well—St. Pierre the Parisienne—cette maîtresse-femme, my cousin Beck herself.”

“ It is not right, monsieur.”

“ Comment ; it is not right ? By whose creed ? Does some dogma of Calvin or Luther condemn it ? What is that to me ? I am no Protestant. My rich father (for, though I have known poverty, and once starved for a year in a garret in Rome—starved wretchedly, often on a meal a day, and sometimes not that—yet I was born to wealth)—my rich father was a good Catholic ; and he gave me a priest and a Jesuit for a tutor. I retain his lessons ; and to what discoveries, grand Dieu ! have they not aided me !”

“ Discoveries made by stealth seem to me dishonourable discoveries.”

“ Puritaine ! I doubt it not. Yet see how my Jesuit’s system works. You know the St. Pierre ?”

“ Partially.”

He laughed. “ You say right — ‘ *partially* ;’



whereas, *I* know her *thoroughly* ; there is the difference. She played before me the amiable ; offered me *patte de velours* ; caressed, flattered, fawned on me. Now, I am accessible to a woman's flattery — accessible against my reason. Though never pretty, she was—when I first knew her— young, or knew how to look young. Like all her countrywomen, she had the art of dressing—she had a certain, cool, easy, social assurance, which spared me the pain of embarrassment ——”

“ Monsieur, that must have been unnecessary. I never saw you embarrassed in my life.”

“ Mademoiselle, you know little of me ; I can be embarrassed as a *petite pensionnaire* ; there is a fund of modesty and diffidence in my nature ——”

“ Monsieur, I never saw it.”

“ Mademoiselle, it is there. You ought to have seen it.”

“ Monsieur, I have observed you in public—on platforms, in tribunes, before titles and crowned heads—and you were as easy as you are in the third division.”

“ Mademoiselle, neither titles nor crowned heads excite my modesty ; and publicity is very much my element. I like it well, and breathe in it

quite freely ; but—but—in short, here is the sentiment brought into action, at this very moment ; however, I disdain to be worsted by it . If, mademoiselle, I were a marrying man (which I am not ; and you may spare yourself the trouble of any sneer you may be contemplating at the thought), and found it necessary to ask a lady whether she could look upon me in the light of a future husband, then would it be proved that I am as I say—modest.”

I quite believed him now ; and, in believing, I honoured him with a sincerity of esteem which made my heart ache.

“ As to the St. Pierre,” he went on, recovering himself, for his voice had altered a little, “ she once intended to be Madame Emanuel ; and I don’t know whither I might have been led, but for yonder little lattice with the light. Ah, magic lattice ! what miracles of discovery hast thou wrought ! Yes,” he pursued, “ I have seen her rancours, her vanities, her levities—not only here, but elsewhere : I have witnessed what bucklers me against all her arts : I am safe from poor Zélie.”

“ And my pupils,” he presently recommenced,

“those blondes jeunes filles—so mild and meek—I have seen the most reserved—romp like boys, the demurest—snatch grapes from the walls, shake pears from the trees. When the English teacher came, I saw her, marked her early preference for this alley, noted her taste for seclusion, watched her well, long before she and I came to speaking terms; do you recollect my once coming silently and offering you a little knot of white violets when we were strangers?”

“I recollect it. I dried the violets, kept them, and have them still.”

“It pleased me when you took them peacefully and promptly, without prudery—that sentiment which I ever dread to excite, and which, when it is revealed in eye or gesture, I vindictively detest. To return. Not only did *I* watch you, but often—especially at eventide—another guardian angel was noiselessly hovering near: night after night my cousin Beck has stolen down yonder steps, and glidingly pursued your movements when you did not see her.”

“But, Monsieur, you could not from the distance of that window see what passed in this garden at night?”

“By moonlight I possibly might with a glass—I use a glass—but the garden itself is open to me. In the shed, at the bottom, there is a door leading into a court, which communicates with the college; of that door I possess the key, and thus come and go at pleasure. This afternoon I came through it, and found you asleep in class; again this evening, I have availed myself of the same entrance.”

I could not help saying, “If you were a wicked, designing man, how terrible would all this be!”

His attention seemed incapable of being arrested by this view of the subject: he lit his cigar, and while he puffed it, leaning against a tree, and looking at me in a cool, amused way he had when his humour was tranquil, I thought proper to go on sermonizing him: he often lectured me by the hour together—I did not see why I should not speak my mind for once. So I told him my impressions concerning his Jesuit-system.

“The knowledge it brings you is bought too dear, monsieur; this coming and going by stealth degrades your own dignity.”

“My dignity!” he cried, laughing; “when did you ever see me trouble my head about my dignity? It is you, Miss Lucy, who are ‘digne.’”

How often, in your high insular presence, have I taken a pleasure in trampling upon, what you are pleased to call, my dignity; tearing it, scattering it to the winds, in those mad transports you witness with such hauteur, and which I know you think very like the ravings of a third-rate London actor."

"Monsieur, I tell you every glance you cast from that lattice is a wrong done to the best part of your own nature. To study the human heart thus, is to banquet secretly and sacreligiously on Eve's apples. I wish you were a Protestant."

Indifferent to the wish, he smoked on. After a space of smiling yet thoughtful silence, he said, rather suddenly—

"I have seen other things."

"What other things?"

Taking the weed from his lips, he threw the remnant amongst the shrubs, where, for a moment, it lay glowing in the gloom.

"Look at it," said he: "is not that spark like an eye watching you and me?"

He took a turn down the walk; presently returning, he went on:

"I have seen, Miss Lucy, things to me unac-



countable, that have made me watch all night for a solution, and I have not yet found it."

The tone was peculiar ; my veins thrilled ; he saw me shiver.

"Are you afraid ? Whether is it of my words or that red jealous eye just winking itself out ?"

"I am cold ; the night grows dark and late, and the air is changed ; it is time to go in."

"It is little past eight, but you shall go in soon. Answer me only this question."

Yet he paused ere he put it. The garden was truly growing dark ; dusk had come on with clouds, and drops of rain began to patter through the trees. I hoped he would feel this, but, for the moment, he seemed too much absorbed to be sensible of the change.

"Mademoiselle, do you Protestants believe in the supernatural ?"

"There is a difference of theory and belief on this point amongst Protestants, as amongst other sects," I answered. "Why, monsieur, do you ask such a question ?"

"Why do you shrink and speak so faintly ? Are you superstitious ?"

"I am constitutionally nervous. I dislike the

discussion of such subjects. I dislike it the more because——”

“ You believe ? ”

“ No : but it has happened to me to experience impressions——”

“ Since you came here ? ”

“ Yes : not many months ago.”

“ Here ?—in this house ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Bon ! I am glad of it. I knew it somehow before you told me. I was conscious of rapport between you and myself. You are patient, and I am choleric ; you are quiet and pale, and I am tanned and fiery ; you are a strict Protestant, and I am a sort of lay Jesuit : but we are alike—there is affinity. Do you see it, mademoiselle, when you look in the glass ? Do you observe that your forehead is shaped like mine—that your eyes are cut like mine ? Do you hear that you have some of my tones of voice ? Do you know that you have many of my looks ? I perceive all this, and believe that you were born under my star. Yes, you were born under my star ! Tremble ! for where that is the case with mortals, the threads of their destinies are difficult to disentangle ; knottings and catchings

occur—sudden breaks leave damage in the web. But these ‘impressions,’ as you say, with English caution. I, too, have had my ‘impressions.’”

“Monsieur, tell me them.”

“I desire no better, and intend no less. You know the legend of this house and garden?”

“I know it. Yes. They say that hundreds of years ago a nun was buried here alive at the foot of this very tree, beneath the ground which now bears us.”

“And that in former days a nun’s ghost used to come and go here.”

“Monsieur, what if it comes and goes here still?”

“Something comes and goes here: there is a shape frequenting this house by night, different to any forms that show themselves by day. I have indisputably seen a something, more than once; and to me its conventual weeds were a strange sight, saying more than they can do to any other living being. A nun!”

“Monsieur, I, too, have seen it.”

“I anticipated that. Whether this nun be flesh and blood, or something that remains when blood is dried and flesh wasted, her business is as much with you as with me, probably. Well, I mean to make

it out: it has baffled me so far, but I mean to follow up the mystery. I mean——”

Instead of telling what he meant, he raised his head suddenly; I made the same movement in the same instant; we both looked to one point—the high tree shadowing the great berceau, and resting some of its boughs on the roof of the first classe. There had been a strange and inexplicable sound from that quarter, as if the arms of that tree had swayed of their own motion, and its weight of foliage had rushed and crushed against the massive trunk. Yes; there scarce stirred a breeze, and that heavy tree was convulsed, whilst the feathery shrubs stood still. For some minutes amongst the wood and leafage a rending and heaving went on. Dark as it was, it seemed to me that something more solid than either night-shadow, or branch-shadow, blackened out of the boles. At last the struggle ceased. What birth succeeded this travail? What Dryad was born of these throes? We watched fixedly. A sudden bell rang in the house—the prayer-bell. Instantly into our alley there came, out of the bureau, an apparition, all black and white: With a sort of angry rush—close, close past our faces—swept swiftly the very NUN herself! Never

had I seen her so clearly. She looked tall of stature, and fierce of gesture. As she went, the wind rose sobbing; the rain poured wild and cold; the whole night seemed to feel her.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## THE FIRST LETTER.

WHERE, it becomes time to inquire, was Paulina Mary? How fared my intercourse with the sumptuous Hotel Crécy? That intercourse had, for an interval, been suspended by absence; M. and Miss de Bassompierre had been travelling, dividing some weeks between the provinces and the capital of France. Chance apprised me of their return very shortly after it took place.

I was walking one mild afternoon on a quiet boulevard, wandering slowly on, enjoying the benign April sun, and some thoughts not unpleasing, when I saw before me a group of riders, stopping as if they had just encountered, and exchanging greetings in the midst of the broad, smooth, linden-bordered path; on one side a middle-aged gentleman and young lady, on the other—a young and hand-

some man. Very graceful was the lady's mien, choice her appointments, delicate and stately her whole aspect. Still, as I looked, I felt they were known to me, and, drawing a little nearer, I fully recognized them all; the Count Home de Bassompierre, his daughter, and Dr. Graham Bretton.

How animated was Graham's face! How true, how warm, yet how retiring the joy it expressed! This was the state of things, this the combination of circumstances, at once to attract and enchain, to subdue and excite Dr. John. The pearl he admired was in itself of great price and truest purity, but he was not the man who, in appreciating the gem, could forget its setting. Had he seen Paulina with the same youth, beauty, and grace, but on foot, alone, unguarded, and in simple attire, a dependent worker, a demi-grisette, he would have thought her a pretty little creature, and would have loved with his eye her movements and her mien, but it required other than this to conquer him as he was now vanquished, to bring him safe under dominion as now, without loss, and even with gain to his manly honour—one saw that he was reduced; there was about Dr. John all the man of the world; to satisfy himself did not suffice; society must approve—the

world must admire what he did, or he counted his measures false and futile. In his victrix he required all that was here visible—the imprint of high cultivation, the consecration of a careful and authoritative protection, the adjuncts that Fashion decrees, Wealth purchases, and Taste adjusts; for these conditions his spirit stipulated ere it surrendered: they were here to the utmost fulfilled; and now, proud, impassioned, yet fearing, he did homage to Paulina as his sovereign. As for her, the smile of feeling, rather than of conscious power, slept soft in her eyes.

They parted. He passed me at speed, hardly feeling the earth he skimmed, and seeing nothing on either hand. He looked very handsome; mettle and purpose were roused in him fully.

“Papa, there is Lucy!” cried a musical, friendly voice, “Lucy, dear Lucy—*do* come here!”

I hastened to her. She threw back her veil, and stooped from her saddle to kiss me.

“I was coming to see you to-morrow,” said she; “but now, to-morrow you will come and see me.”

She named the hour, and I promised compliance.

The morrow’s evening found me with her—she and I shut into her own room. I had not seen her

since that occasion when her claims were brought into comparison with those of Ginevra Fanshawe, and had so signally prevailed; she had much to tell me of her travels in the interval. A most animated, rapid speaker was she in such *tête-à-tête*, a most lively describer; yet with her artless diction and clear, soft voice, she never seemed to speak too fast or say too much. My own attention I think would not soon have flagged, but by-and-by, she herself seemed to need some change of subject; she hastened to wind up her narrative briefly. Yet why she terminated with so concise an abridgment did not immediately appear; silence followed—a restless silence, not without symptoms of abstraction. Then, turning to me, in a diffident, half-appealing voice,—

“Lucy—”

“Well, I am at your side.”

“Is my cousin Ginevra still at Madame Beck’s?”

“Your cousin is still there; you must be longing to see her.”

“No—not much.”

“You want to invite her to spend another evening?”

“No. . . . I suppose she still talks about being married?”

“Not to any one you care for.”

“But of course she still thinks of Dr. Bretton? She cannot have changed her mind on that point, because it was so fixed two months ago?”

“Why, you know, it does not matter. You saw the terms on which they stood.”

“There was a little misunderstanding that evening, certainly; does she seem unhappy?”

“Not she. To change the subject. Have you heard or seen nothing of, or from Graham during your absence?”

“Papa had letters from him once or twice, about business I think. He undertook the management of some affair which required attention, while we were away. Dr. Bretton seems to respect papa, and to have pleasure in obliging him.”

“Yes: you met him yesterday on the boulevard; you would be able to judge from his aspect that his friends need not be painfully anxious about his health?”

“Papa seems to have thought with you. I could not help smiling. He is not particularly observant, you know, because he is often thinking of other things than what pass before his eyes; but he said, as Dr. Bretton rode away, ‘Really it does a man



good to see the spirit and energy of that boy.' He called Dr. Bretton a boy ; I believe he almost thinks him so, just as he thinks me a little girl ; he was not speaking to me, but dropped that remark to himself. Lucy . . . ."

Again fell the appealing accent, and at the same instant she left her chair, and came and sat on the stool at my feet.

I liked her. It is not a declaration I have often made concerning my acquaintance, in the course of this book ; the reader will bear with it for once. Intimate intercourse, close inspection, disclosed in Paulina only what was delicate, intelligent, and sincere ; therefore my regard for her lay deep. An admiration more superficial might have been more demonstrative ; mine, however, was quiet.

"What have you to ask of Lucy?" said I ; "be brave, and speak out."

But there was no courage in her eye ; as it met mine, it fell ; and there was no coolness on her cheek—not a transient surface-blush, but a gathering inward excitement raised its tint and its temperature.

"Lucy, I *do* wish to know your thoughts of Dr.

Bretton. Do, *do* give me your real opinion of his character—his disposition.”

“His character stands high, and deservedly high.”

“And his disposition? Tell me about his disposition,” she urged; “you know him well.”

“I know him pretty well.”

“You know his home-side. You have seen him with his mother; speak of him as a son.”

“He is a fine-hearted son; his mother’s comfort and hope, her pride and pleasure.”

She held my hand between hers, and at each favourable word gave it a little caressing stroke.

“In what other way is he good, dear Lucy?”

“Dr. Bretton is benevolent—humanely disposed towards all his race. Dr. Bretton would have benignity for the lowest savage, or the worst criminal.”

“I heard some gentlemen, some of papa’s friends, who were talking about him, say the same. They say many of the poor patients at the hospitals, who tremble before some pitiless and selfish surgeons, welcome him.”

“They are right; I have witnessed as much. He once took me over a hospital; I saw how he was received: your father’s friends are right.”

The softest gratitude animated her eye, as she lifted

it a moment. She had yet more to say, but seemed hesitating about time and place. Dusk was beginning to reign; her parlour fire already glowed with twilight ruddiness; but I thought she wished the room dimmer, the hour later.

“How quiet and secluded we feel here!” I remarked, to reassure her.

“Do we? Yes; it is a still evening, and I shall not be called down to tea; papa is dining out.”

Still holding my hand, she played with the fingers unconsciously, dressed them, now in her own rings, and now circled them with a twine of her beautiful hair; she patted the palm against her hot cheek, and at last, having cleared a voice that was naturally liquid as a lark’s, she said:—

“You must think it rather strange that I should talk so much about Dr. Bretton, ask so many questions, take such an interest, but—”

“Not at all strange; perfectly natural; you like him.”

“And if I did,” said she, with slight quickness, “is that a reason why I should talk? I suppose you think me weak, like my cousin Ginevra?”

“If I thought you one whit like Madame Ginevra, I would not sit here waiting for your com-

munications. I would get up, walk at my ease about the room, and anticipate all you had to say by a round lecture. Go on."

"I mean to go on," retorted she; "what else do you suppose I mean to do?" And she looked and spoke—the little Polly of Bretton—petulant, sensitive. "If," said she emphatically, "if I liked Dr. John till I was fit to die for liking him, that alone could not license me to be otherwise than dumb—dumb as the grave—dumb as you, Lucy Snowe—you know it—and you know you would despise me if I failed in self-control, and whined about some rickety liking that was all on my side."

"It is true I little respect women or girls who are loquacious either in boasting the triumphs, or bemoaning the mortifications, of feeling. But as to *you*, Paulina, speak, for I earnestly wish to hear you. Tell me all it will give you pleasure or relief to tell; I ask no more."

"Do you care for me, Lucy?"

"Yes, I do, Paulina."

"And I love you. I had an odd content in being with you even when I was a little, troublesome, disobedient girl; it was charming to me then to lavish on you my naughtiness and whims. Now you are

acceptable to me, and I like to talk with and trust you. So listen, Lucy."

And she settled herself, resting against my arm—resting gently, not with honest Mistress Fanshawe's fatiguing and selfish weight.

"A few minutes since you asked whether we had not heard from Graham during our absence, and I said there were two letters for papa on business; this was true, but I did not tell you all."

"You evaded?"

"I shuffled and equivocated, you know. However, I am going to speak the truth now; it is getting darker; one can talk at one's ease. Papa often lets me open the letter-bag and give him out the contents. One morning, about three weeks ago, you don't know how surprised I was to find, amongst a dozen letters for M. de Bassompierre, a note addressed to Miss de Bassompierre. I spied it at once, amidst all the rest; the handwriting was not strange; it attracted me directly. I was going to say, 'Papa, here is another letter from Dr. Bretton;' but the 'Miss' struck me mute. I actually never received a letter from a gentleman before. Ought I to have shown it to papa, and let him open it and read it first? I could not for my life, Lucy. I know



so well papa's ideas about me : he forgets my age ; he thinks I am a mere school-girl ; he is not aware that other people see I am grown up as tall as I shall be ; so, with a curious mixture of feelings, some of them self-reproachful, and some so fluttering and strong, I cannot describe them, I gave papa his twelve letters—his herd of possessions—and kept back my one, my ewe-lamb. It lay in my lap during breakfast, looking up at me with an inexplicable meaning, making me feel myself a thing double-existent—a child to that dear papa, but no more a child to myself. After breakfast I carried my letter up-stairs, and having secured myself by turning the key in the door, I began to study the outside of my treasure : it was some minutes before I could get over the direction and penetrate the seal ; one does not take a strong place of this kind by instant storm—one sits down awhile before it, as beleaguers say. Graham's hand is like himself, Lucy, and so is his seal—all clear, firm, and rounded—no slovenly splash of wax—a full, solid, steady drop—a distinct impress : no pointed turns harshly pricking the optic nerve, but a clean, mellow, pleasant manuscript, that soothes you as you read. It is like his face — just like

the chiselling of his features : do you know his autograph ?”

“ I have seen it : go on.”

“ The seal was too beautiful to be broken, so I cut it round with my scissors. On the point of reading the letter at last, I once more drew back voluntarily ; it was too soon yet to drink that draught—the sparkle in the cup was so beautiful—I would watch it yet a minute. Then I remembered all at once that I had not said my prayers that morning. Having heard papa go down to breakfast a little earlier than usual, I had been afraid of keeping him waiting, and had hastened to join him as soon as dressed, thinking no harm to put off prayers till afterwards. Some people would say I ought to have served God first and then man ; but I don’t think Heaven could be jealous of anything I might do for papa. I believe I am superstitious. A voice seemed now to say that another feeling than filial affection was in question—to urge me to pray before I dared to read what I so longed to read—to deny myself yet a moment, and remember first a great duty. I have had these impulses ever since I can remember. I put the letter down and said my prayers, adding, at the end, a strong entreaty that

whatever happened, I might not be tempted or led to cause papa any sorrow, and might never, in caring for others, neglect him. The very thought of such a possibility so pierced my heart that it made me cry. But still, Lucy, I felt that in time papa would have to be taught the truth, managed, and induced to hear reason.

“I read the letter. Lucy, life is said to be all disappointment. *I* was not disappointed. Ere I read, and while I read, my heart did more than throb—it trembled fast—every quiver seemed like the pant of an animal athirst, laid down at a well and drinking; and the well proved quite full, gloriously clear; it rose up munificently of its own impulse; I saw the sun through its gush, and not a mote, Lucy, no moss, no insect, no atom in the thrice-refined golden gurgle.

“Life,” she went on, “is said to be full of pain to some. I have read biographies where the wayfarer seemed to journey on from suffering to suffering; where Hope flew before him fast, never alighting so near, or lingering so long, as to give his hand a chance of one realizing grasp. I have read of those who sowed in tears, and whose harvest, so far from being reaped in joy, perished by

untimely blight, or was borne off by sudden whirlwind ; and, alas ! some of these met the winter with empty garners, and died of utter want in the darkest and coldest of the year."

" Was it their fault, Paulina, that they of whom you speak thus died ?"

" Not always their fault. Some of them were good, endeavouring people. I am not endeavouring, nor actively good, yet God has caused me to grow in sun, due moisture, and safe protection, sheltered, fostered, taught, by my dear father ; and now—now—another comes. Graham loves me."

For some minutes we both paused on this climax.

" Does your father know ?" I inquired, in a low voice.

" Graham spoke with deep respect of papa, but implied that he dared not approach that quarter as yet ; he must first prove his worth : he added that he must have some light respecting myself and my own feelings ere he ventured to risk a step in the matter elsewhere."

" How did you reply ?"

" I replied briefly, but I did not repulse him. Yet I almost trembled for fear of making the answer too cordial : Graham's tastes are so

fastidious. I wrote it three times—chastening and subduing the phrases at every rescript; at last, having confected it till it seemed to me to resemble a morsel of ice flavoured with ever so slight a zest of fruit or sugar, I ventured to seal and despatch it.”

“Excellent, Paulina! Your instinct is fine; you understand Dr. Bretton.”

“But how must I manage about papa? There I am still in pain.”

“Do not manage at all. Wait now. Only maintain no further correspondence till your father knows all, and gives his sanction.”

“Will he ever give it?”

“Time will show. Wait.”

“Dr. Bretton wrote one other letter, deeply grateful for my calm, brief note; but I anticipated your advice, by saying, that while my sentiments continued the same, I could not without my father’s knowledge write again.”

“You acted as you ought to have done; so Dr. Bretton will feel: it will increase his pride in you, his love for you, if either be capable of increase. Paulina, that gentle hoar-frost of yours, surrounding so much pure, fine flame, is a priceless privilege of nature.”



“ You see I feel Graham’s disposition,” said she. “ I feel that no delicacy can be too exquisite for his treatment.”

“ It is perfectly proved that you comprehend him, and then—whatever Dr. Bretton’s disposition, were he one who expected to be more nearly met—you would still act truthfully, openly, tenderly, with your father.”

“ Lucy, I trust I shall thus act always. Oh, it will be pain to wake papa from his dream, and tell him I am no more a little girl !”

“ Be in no hurry to do so, Paulina. Leave the revelation to Time and your kind Fate. I also have noticed the gentleness of her cares for you : doubt not she will benignantly order the circumstances, and fitly appoint the hour. Yes ; I have thought over your life just as you have yourself thought it over ; I have made comparisons like those to which you adverted. We know not the future, but the past has been propitious.

“ As a child I feared for you ; nothing that has life was ever more susceptible than your nature in infancy : under harshness, or neglect, neither your outward nor your inward self would have ripened to

what they now are. Much pain, much fear, much struggle would have troubled the very lines of your features, broken their regularity, would have harassed your nerves into the fever of habitual irritation: you would have lost in health and cheerfulness, in grace and sweetness. Providence has protected and cultured you, not only for your own sake, but I believe for Graham's. His star, too, was fortunate: to develope fully the best of his nature, a companion like you was needed; there you are, ready. You must be united. I knew it the first day I saw you together at La Terrasse. In all that mutually concerns you and Graham there seems to me promise, plan, harmony. I do not think the sunny youth of either will prove the forerunner of stormy age. I think it is deemed good that you two should live in peace and be happy—not as angels, but as few are happy amongst mortals. Some lives *are* thus blessed: it is God's will: it is the attesting trace and lingering evidence of Eden. Other lives run from the first another course. Other travellers encounter weather fitful and gusty, wild and variable—breast adverse winds, are belated and overtaken by the early closing winter night. Neither can this happen without the

sanction of God ; and I know that, amidst His boundless works, is somewhere stored the secret of this last fate's justice : I know that His treasures contain the proof as the promise of its mercy."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## M. PAUL KEEPS HIS PROMISE.

ON the first of May, we had all—*i. e.* the twenty boarders and the four teachers—notice to rise at five o'clock of the morning, to be dressed and ready by six, to put ourselves under the command of M. le Professeur Emanuel, who was to head our march forth from Villette, for it was on this day he proposed to fulfil his promise of taking us to breakfast in the country. I, indeed, as the reader may perhaps remember, had not had the honour of an invitation when this excursion was first projected—rather the contrary; but on my now making allusion to this fact, and wishing to know how it was to be, my ear received a pull, of which I did not venture to challenge the repetition by raising further difficulties.

“Je vous conseille de vous faire prier,” said M.

Emanuel, imperially menacing the other ear. One Napoleonic compliment, however, was enough, so I made up my mind to be of the party.

The morning broke calm as summer, with singing of birds in the garden, and a light dew-mist that promised heat. We all said it would be warm, and we all felt pleasure in folding away heavy garments, and in assuming the attire suiting a sunny season. The clean fresh print dress, and the light straw bonnet, each made and trimmed as the French workwoman alone can make and trim, so as to unite the utterly unpretending with the perfectly becoming, was the rule of costume. Nobody flaunted in faded silk; nobody wore a second-hand best article.

At six the bell rang merrily, and we poured down the staircase, through the carré, along the corridor, into the vestibule. There stood our Professor, wearing, not his savage-looking paletot and severe bonnet-grec, but a young-looking belted-blouse and cheerful straw hat. He had for us all the kindest good-morrow, and most of us for him had a thanksgiving smile. We were marshalled in order and soon started.

The streets were yet quiet, and the boulevards



were fresh and peaceful as fields. I believe we were very happy as we walked along. This chief of ours had the secret of giving a certain impetus to happiness when he would; just as, in an opposite mood, he could give a thrill to fear.

He did not lead nor follow us, but walked along the line, giving a word to every one, talking much to his favourites, and not wholly neglecting even those he disliked. It was rather my wish, for a reason I had, to keep slightly aloof from notice, and being paired with Ginevra Fanshawe, bearing on my arm the dear pressure of that angel's not unsubstantial limb—(she continued in excellent case, and I can assure the reader it was no trifling business to bear the burden of her loveliness; many a time in the course of that warm day I wished to goodness there had been less of the charming commodity)—however, having her, as I said, I tried to make her useful by interposing her always between myself and M. Paul, shifting my place, according as I heard him coming up to the right hand or the left. My private motive for this manœuvre might be traced to the circumstance of the new print dress I wore, being pink in colour—a fact which, under our present convoy, made me feel something as I

have felt, when, clad in a shawl with a red border necessitated to traverse a meadow where pastured a bull.

For awhile, the shifting system, together with some modifications in the arrangement of a black silk scarf, answered my purpose; but, by-and-bye, he found out, that whether he came to this side or to that, Miss Fanshawe was still his neighbour. The course of acquaintance between Ginevra and him had never run so smooth that his temper did not undergo a certain crisping process whenever he heard her English accent: nothing in their dispositions fitted; they jarred if they came in contact; he held her empty and affected; she deemed him bearish, meddling, repellent.

At last, when he had changed his place for about the sixth time, finding still the same untoward result to the experiment—he thrust his head forward, settled his eyes on mine, and demanded with impatience—

“Qu’ est ce que c’ est? Vous me jouez des tours?”

The words were hardly out of his mouth, however, ere, with his customary quickness, he seized the root of this proceeding: in vain I shook out

the long fringe, and spread forth the broad end of my scarf. "A—h—h! c' est la robe rose!" broke from his lips, affecting me very much like the sudden and irate low of some lord of the meadow.

"It is only cotton," I alleged, hurriedly; "and cheaper, and washes better than any other colour."

"Et Mademoiselle Lucie est coquette comme dix Parisiennes," he answered. "A-t-on jamais vu une Anglaise pareille. Regardez plutôt son chapeau, et ses gants, et ses brodequins!" These articles of dress were just like what my companions wore; certainly not one whit smarter—perhaps rather plainer than most—but monsieur had now got hold of his text, and I began to chafe under the expected sermon. It went off, however, as mildly as the menace of a storm sometimes passes on a summer day. I got but one flash of sheet lightning in the shape of a single bantering smile from his eyes; and then he said:—

"Courage!—à vrai dire je ne suis pas fâché, peut-être même suis je content qu'on s'est fait si belle pour ma petite fête."

"Mais ma robe n' est pas belle, monsieur—elle n' est que propre."

"J'aime la propreté," said he. In short, he was

not to be dissatisfied ; the sun of good humour was to triumph on this auspicious morning ; it consumed scudding clouds ere they sullied its disk.

And now we were in the country, amongst what they called "*les bois et les petits sentiers.*" These woods and lanes a month later, would offer but a dusty and doubtful seclusion : now, however, in their May greenness and morning repose, they looked very pleasant.

We reached a certain well planted round, in the taste of Labassecour, with an orderly circle of lime-trees : here a halt was called ; on the green swell of ground surrounding this well, we were ordered to be seated, monsieur taking his place in our midst, and suffering us to gather in a knot round him. Those who liked him more than they feared, came close, and these were chiefly little ones ; those who feared more than they liked, kept somewhat aloof ; those in whom much affection had given, even to what remained of fear, a pleasurable zest, observed the greatest distance.

He began to tell us a story. Well could he narrate : in such a diction as children love, and learned men emulate ; a diction simple in its strength, and strong in its simplicity. There were beautiful

touches in that little tale ; sweet glimpses of feeling and hues of description that, while I listened, sunk into my mind, and since have never faded. He tinted a twilight scene—I hold it in memory still—such a picture I have never looked on from artists' pencil.

I have said that, for myself, I had no impromptu faculty ; and perhaps that very deficiency made me marvel the more at one who possessed it in perfection. M. Emanuel was not a man to write books ; but I have heard him lavish, with careless, unconscious prodigality, such mental wealth as books seldom boast ; his mind was indeed my library, and whenever it was opened to me, I entered bliss. Intellectually imperfect as I was, I could read little ; there were few bound and printed volumes that did not weary me—whose perusal did not fag and blind—but his tomes of thought were collyrium to the spirit's eyes ; over their contents, inward sight grew clear and strong. I used to think what a delight it would be for one who loved him better than he loved himself, to gather and store up those handfuls of gold-dust, so recklessly flung to heaven's reckless winds.

His story done, he approached the little knol



where I and Ginevra sat apart. In his usual mode of demanding an opinion (he had not reticence to wait till it was voluntarily offered) he asked :—

“ Were you interested ? ”

According to my wonted undemonstrative fashion, I simply answered—

“ Yes.”

“ Was it good ? ”

“ Very good.”

“ Yet I could not write that down,” said he.

“ Why not, monsieur ? ”

“ I hate the mechanical labour ; I hate to stoop and sit still. I could dictate it, though, with pleasure to an amanuensis who suited me. Would Mademoiselle Lucy write for me if I asked her ? ”

“ Monsieur would be too quick ; he would urge me, and be angry, if my pen did not keep pace with his lips.”

“ Try some day ; let us see the monster I can make of myself under the circumstances. But just now, there is no question of dictation ; I mean to make you useful in another office. Do you see yonder farm-house ? ”

“ Surrounded with trees ? Yes.”

“ There we are to breakfast ; and while the good

fermière makes the café au lait in a caldron, you and five others, whom I shall select, will spread with butter half a hundred rolls."

Having formed his troop into line once more, he marched us straight on the farm, which, on seeing our force, surrendered without capitulation.

Clean knives and plates, and fresh butter being provided, half a dozen of us, chosen by our professor, set to work under his directions, to prepare for breakfast a huge basket of rolls, with which the baker had been ordered to provision the farm, in anticipation of our coming. Coffee and chocolate were already made hot; cream and new-laid eggs were added to the treat, and M. Emanuel, always generous, would have given a large order for "jambon" and "confitures" in addition, but that some of us, who presumed perhaps upon our influence, insisted that it would be a most reckless waste of victual. He railed at us for our pains, terming us "*des ménagères avares*;" but we let him talk, and managed the economy of the repast our own way.

With what a pleasant countenance he stood on the farm-kitchen hearth looking on! He was a man whom it made happy to see others happy; he

liked to have movement, animation, abundance and enjoyment round him. We asked where he would sit. He told us, we knew well he was our slave, and we his tyrants, and that he dared not so much as choose a chair without our leave; so we set him the farmer's great chair at the head of the long table, and put him into it.

Well might we like him, with all his passions and hurricanes, when he could be so benignant and docile at times, as he was just now. Indeed, at the worst, it was only his nerves that were irritable, not his temper that was radically bad; soothe, comprehend, comfort him, and he was a lamb; he would not harm a fly. Only to the very stupid, perverse, or unsympathizing, was he in the slightest degree dangerous.

Mindful always of his religion, he made the youngest of the party say a little prayer before we begun breakfast, crossing himself as devoutly as a woman. I had never seen him pray before, or make that pious sign; he did it so simply, with such child-like faith, I could not help smiling pleasantly as I watched; his eyes met my smile; he just stretched out his kind hand, saying,

“Donnez moi la main! I see we worship the

same God, in the same spirit, though by different rites."

Most of M. Emanuel's brother professors were emancipated free-thinkers, infidels, atheists; and many of them men whose lives would not bear scrutiny: he was more like a knight of old, religious in his way, and of spotless fame. Innocent childhood, beautiful youth were safe at his side. He had vivid passions, keen feelings, but his pure honour and his artless piety were the strong charm that kept the lions couchant.

That breakfast was a merry meal, and the merriment was not mere vacant clatter: M. Paul originated, led, controlled and heightened it; his social, lively temper played unfettered and unclouded; surrounded only by women and children there was nothing to cross and thwart him; he had his own way, and a pleasant way it was.

The meal over, the party were free to run and play in the meadows; a few stayed to help the farmer's wife to put away her earthenware. M. Paul called me from among these to come out and sit near him under a tree—whence he could view the troop gambolling over a wide pasture—and read to him whilst he took his cigar. He sat on a rustic

bench, and I at the tree-root. While I read (a pocket-classic—a Corneille—I did not like it, but he did, finding therein beauties I never could be brought to perceive), he listened with a sweetness of calm the more impressive from the impetuosity of his general nature; the deepest happiness filled his blue eye and smoothed his broad forehead. I, too was happy, happy with the bright day, happier with his presence, happiest with his kindness.

He asked, by-and-by, if I would not rather run to my companions than sit there? I said, no; I felt content to be where he was. He asked whether, if I were his sister, I should always be content to stay with a brother such as he. I said, I believed I should; and I felt it. Again, he inquired whether, if he were to leave Villette, and go far away, I should be sorry; and I dropped Corneille, and made no reply.

“Petite sœur,” said he; “how long could you remember me if we were separated?”

“That, monsieur, I can never tell, because I do not know how long it will be before I shall cease to remember everything earthly.”

“If I were to go beyond seas for two—three—five years, should you welcome me on my return?”



“Monsieur, how could I live in the interval?”

“Pourtant j’ai été pour vous bien dur, bien exigeant.”

I hid my face with the book, for it was covered with tears. I asked him why he talked so; and he said he would talk so no more, and cheered me again with the kindest encouragement. Still, the gentleness with which he treated me during the rest of the day, went somehow to my heart. It was too tender. It was mournful. I would rather he had been abrupt, whimsical, and irate as was his wont.

When hot noon arrived—for the day turned out as we had anticipated; glowing as June—our shepherd collected his sheep from the pasture, and proceeded to lead us all softly home. But we had a whole league to walk—thus far from Villette was the farm where we had breakfasted; the children, especially, were tired with their play; the spirits of most flagged at the prospect of this mid-day walk over chaussées flinty, glaring and dusty. This state of things had been foreseen and provided for. Just beyond the boundary of the farm we met two spacious vehicles coming to fetch us—such conveyances as are hired out purposely for the

accommodation of school-parties ; here, with good management, room was found for all, and in another hour M. Paul made safe consignment of his charge at the Rue Fossette. It had been a pleasant day : it would have been perfect, but for the breathing of melancholy which had dimmed its sunshine a moment.

That tarnish was renewed the same evening.

Just about sunset, I saw M. Emanuel come out of the front-door, accompanied by Madame Beck. They paced the centre-alley for nearly an hour, talking earnestly : he—looking grave, yet restless ; she—wearing an amazed, expostulatory, dissuasive air.

I wondered what was under discussion ; and when Madame Beck re-entered the house as it darkened, leaving her kinsman Paul yet lingering in the garden, I said to myself—

“ He called me ‘ *petite sœur* ’ this morning. If he were really my brother, how I should like to go to him just now, and ask what it is that presses on his mind. See how he leans against that tree, with his arms crossed and his brow bent. He wants consolation, I know : Madame

does not console ; she only remonstrates. What now —— ?”

Starting from quiescence to action, M. Paul came striding erect and quick down the garden. The carré doors were yet open : I thought he was probably going to water the orange-trees in the tubs, after his occasional custom ; on reaching the court, however, he took an abrupt turn and made for the berceau and the first classe glass-door. There, in that first classe I was, thence I had been watching him ; but there I could not find courage to await his approach. He had turned so suddenly, he strode so fast, he looked so strange ; the coward within me grew pale, shrunk and—not waiting to listen to reason, and hearing the shrubs crush and the gravel crunch to his advance—she was gone on the wings of panic.

Nor did I pause till I had taken sanctuary in the oratory, now empty. Listening there with beating pulses, and an unaccountable, undefined apprehension, I heard him pass through all the schoolrooms, clashing the doors impatiently as he went ; I heard him invade the refectory which the “ lecture pieuse ” was now holding under hallowed constraint ; I heard him pronounce these words—

“Où est Mademoiselle Lucie?”

And just as, summoning my courage, I was preparing to go down and do what, after all, I most wished to do in the world—viz., meet him—the wiry voice of St. Pierre replied glibly and falsely, “Elle est au lit.” And he passed, with the stamp of vexation, into the corridor. There Madame Beck met, captured, chid, convoyed to the street-door, and finally dismissed him.

As that street-door closed, a sudden amazement at my own perverse proceeding struck like a blow upon me. I felt from the first it was me he wanted—me he was seeking—and had not I wanted him too? What, then, had carried me away? What had rapt me beyond his reach? He had something to tell: he was going to tell me that something: my ear strained its nerve to hear it, and I had made the confidence impossible. Yearning to listen and console, while I thought audience and solace beyond hope’s reach—no sooner did opportunity suddenly and fully arrive, than I evaded it, as I would have evaded the levelled shaft of mortality.

Well, my insane inconsistency had its reward. Instead of the comfort, the certain satisfaction, I might have won—could I but have put choking

panic down, and stood firm two minutes—here was dead blank, dark doubt, and drear suspense.

I took my wages to my pillow, and passed the night counting them.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## MALEVOLA.

MADAME BECK called me on Thursday afternoon, and asked whether I had any occupation to hinder me from going into town and executing some little commissions for her at the shops.

Being disengaged, and placing myself at her service, I was presently furnished with a list of the wools, silks, embroidering thread, etcetera, wanted in the pupils' work, and having equipped myself in a manner suiting the threatening aspect of a cloudy and sultry day, I was just drawing the spring-bolt of the street-door, in act to issue forth, when Madame's voice again summoned me to the *salle à manger*.

"Pardon, Meess Lucie!" cried she, in the seeming haste of an impromptu thought, "I have just recol-

lected one more errand for you, if your good nature will not deem itself overburdened?"

Of course I "confounded myself" in asseverations to the contrary; and Madame, running into the little salon, brought thence a pretty basket, filled with fine hothouse fruit, rosy, perfect, and tempting, reposing amongst the dark green, wax-like leaves, and pale yellow stars of, I know not what, exotic plant.

"There," she said, "it is not heavy, and will not shame your neat toilette, as if it were a household, servant-like detail. Do me the favour to leave this little basket at the house of Madame Walravens, with my felicitations on her fête. She lives down in the old town, Numéro 3, Rue des Mages. I fear you will find the walk rather long, but you have the whole afternoon before you, and do not hurry; if you are not back in time for dinner, I will order a portion to be saved, or Goten, with whom you are a favourite, will have pleasure in tossing up some trifle, for your especial benefit. You shall not be forgotten, *ma bonne meess*. And oh! please!" (calling me back once more) "be sure to insist on seeing Madame Walravens herself, and giving the basket into her own

hands, in order that there may be no mistake, for she is rather a punctilious personage. Adieu ! Au revoir !”

And at last I got away. The shop-commissions took some time to execute, that choosing and matching of silks and wools being always a tedious business, but at last I got through my list. The patterns for the slippers, the bell-ropes, the cabas were selected—the slides and tassels for the purses chosen—the whole “tripotage,” in short, was off my mind ; nothing but the fruit and the felicitations remained to be attended to.

I rather liked the prospect of a long walk, deep into the old and grim Basse-Ville ; and I liked it no worse because the evening sky, over the city, was settling into a mass of black-blue metal, heated at the rim, and inflaming slowly to a heavy red.

I fear a high wind, because storm demands that exertion of strength and use of action I always yield with pain ; but the sullen down-fall, the thick snow-descent, or dark rush of rain, asks only resignation—the quiet abandonment of garments and person to be drenched. In return, it sweeps a great capital clean before you ; it makes you a quiet path

through broad, grand streets; it petrifies a living city, as if by eastern enchantment; it transforms a Villette into a Tadmor. Let, then, the rains fall, and the floods descend—only I must first get rid of this basket of fruit.

An unknown clock from an unknown tower (Jean Baptiste's voice was now too distant to be audible) was tolling the third quarter past five, when I reached that street and house whereof Madame Beck had given me the address. It was no street at all; it seemed rather to be part of a square; it was quiet, grass grew between the broad gray flags, the houses were large and looked very old—behind them rose the appearance of trees, indicating gardens at the back. Antiquity brooded above this region, business was banished thence. Rich men had once possessed this quarter, and once grandeur had made her seat here. That church whose dark, half-ruinous turrets overlooked the square, was the venerable and formerly opulent shrine of the Magi. But wealth and greatness had long since stretched their gilded pinions and fled hence, leaving these their ancient nests, perhaps to house Penury for a time, or perhaps to stand cold and empty, mouldering untenanted in the course of winters.

As I crossed this deserted "place," on whose pavement drops almost as large as a five-franc piece were now slowly darkening, I saw, in its whole expanse, no symptom or evidence of life, except what was given in the figure of an infirm old priest, who went past, bending and propped on a staff—the type of eld and decay.

He had issued from the very house to which I was directed; and when I paused before the door just closed after him, and rang the bell, he turned to look at me. Nor did he soon avert his gaze; perhaps he thought me, with my basket of summer fruit, and my lack of the dignity age confers, an incongruous figure in such a scene. I know, had a young ruddy-faced *bonne* opened the door to admit me, I should have thought such a one little in harmony with her dwelling; but when I found myself confronted by a very old woman, wearing a very antique peasant costume, a cap alike hideous and costly, with long flaps of native lace, a petticoat and jacket of cloth, and sabots more like little boats than shoes, it seemed all right, and soothingly in character.

The expression of her face was not quite so soothing as the cut of her costume; anything more can-



tankerous I have seldom seen; she would scarcely reply to my inquiry after Madame Walravens; I believe she would have snatched the basket of fruit from my hand, had not the old priest, hobbling up, checked her, and himself lent an ear to the message with which I was charged.

His apparent deafness rendered it a little difficult to make him fully understand that I must see Madame Walravens, and consign the fruit into her own hands. At last, however, he comprehended the fact that such were my orders, and that duty enjoined their literal fulfilment. Addressing the aged *bonne*, not in French, but in the aboriginal tongue of *La-bassecour*, he persuaded her, at last, to let me cross the inhospitable threshold, and himself escorting me up-stairs, I was ushered into a sort of salon, and there left.

The room was large, and had a fine old ceiling, and almost church-like windows of coloured glass; but it was desolate, and in the shadow of the coming storm, looked strangely lowering. Within—opened a smaller room; there, however, the blind of the single casement was closed; through the deep gloom few details of furniture were apparent. These few I amused myself by puzzling to make out; and, in

particular, I was attracted by the outline of a picture on the wall.

By-and-bye the picture seemed to give way: to my bewilderment, it shook, it sunk, it rolled back into nothing; its vanishing left an opening arched, leading into an arched passage, with a mystic winding stair; both passage and stair were of cold stone, uncarpeted and unpainted. Down this donjon stair descended a tap, tap, like a stick; soon, there fell on the steps a shadow, and last of all, I was aware of a substance.

Yet, was it actual substance, this appearance approaching me? this obstruction, partially darkening the arch?

It drew near, and I saw it well. I began to comprehend where I was. Well might this old square be named quarter of the Magii—well might the three towers, overlooking it, own for godfathers three mystic sages of a dead and dark art. Hoar enchantment here prevailed; a spell had opened for me elf-land—that cell-like room, that vanishing picture, that arch and passage, and stair of stone, were all parts of a fairy tale. Distincter even than these scenic details stood the chief figure—Cunegonde, the sorceress! Malevola, the evil fairy. How was she?

She might be three feet high, but she had no shape; her skinny hands rested upon each other, and pressed the gold knob of a wand-like ivory staff. Her face was large, set, not upon her shoulders, but before her breast; she seemed to have no neck; I should have said there were a hundred years in her features, and more perhaps in her eyes—her malign, unfriendly eyes, with thick gray brows above, and livid lids all round. How severely they viewed me, with a sort of dull displeasure!

This being wore a gown of brocade, dyed bright blue, full-tinted as the gentianella flower, and covered with satin foliage in a large pattern; over the gown a costly shawl, gorgeously bordered, and so large for her, that its many-coloured fringe swept the floor. But her chief points were her jewels: she had long, clear ear-rings, blazing with a lustre which could not be borrowed or false; she had rings on her skeleton hands, with thick gold hoops, and stones—purple, green, and blood-red. Hunchbacked, dwarfish, and doting, she was adorned like a barbarian queen.

“*Que me voulez-vous?*” said she hoarsely, with the voice rather of male than of female old age; and, indeed, a silver beard bristled her chin.

I delivered my basket and my message.

"Is that all?" she demanded.

"It is all," said I.

"Truly, it was well worth while," she answered.

"Return to Madame Beck, and tell her I can buy fruit when I want it, et quant à ses félicitations, je m'en moque!" And this courteous dame turned her back.

Just as she turned, a peal of thunder broke, and a flash of lightning blazed broad over salon and boudoir. The tale of magic seemed to proceed with due accompaniment of the elements. The wanderer, decoyed into the enchanted castle, heard rising, outside, the spell-wakened tempest.

What, in all this, was I to think of Madame Beck? She owned strange acquaintance; she offered messages and gifts at an unique shrine, and inauspicious seemed the bearing of the uncouth thing she worshipped. There went that sullen Sidonia, tottering and trembling like palsy incarnate, tapping her ivory staff on the mosaic parquet, and muttering venomously as she vanished.

Down washed the rain, deep lowered the welkin; the clouds, ruddy a while ago, had now, through all their blackness, turned deadly pale, as if in terror.

Notwithstanding my late boast about not fearing a shower, I hardly liked to go out under this water-spout. Then the gleams of lightning were very fierce, the thunder crashed very near; this storm had gathered immediately above Villette; it seemed to have burst at the zenith; it rushed down prone; the forked, slant bolts pierced athwart vertical torrents; red zig-zags interlaced a descent blanché as white metal: and all broke from a sky heavily black in its swollen abundance.

Leaving Madame Walravens' inhospitable salon, I betook myself to her cold staircase; there was a seat on the landing—there I waited. Somebody came gliding along the gallery just above; it was the old priest.

“Indeed Mademoiselle shall not sit there,” said he. “It would displease our benefactor if he knew a stranger was so treated in this house.”

And he begged me so earnestly to return to the salon, that, without discourtesy, I could not but comply. The smaller room was better furnished and more habitable than the larger; thither he introduced me. Partially withdrawing the blind, he disclosed what seemed more like an oratory than a boudoir, a very solemn little chamber, looking as if



t were a place rather dedicated to relics and remembrance, than designed for present use and comfort.

The good father sat down, as if to keep me company ; but instead of conversing, he took out a book, fastened on the page his eyes, and employed his lips in whispering—what sounded like a prayer or litany. A yellow electric light from the sky gilded his bald head ; his figure remained in shade — deep and purple ; he sat still as sculpture ; he seemed to forget me for his prayers ; he only looked up when a fiercer bolt, or a harsher, closer rattle told of nearing danger ; even then, it was not in fear, but in seeming awe, he raised his eyes. I too was awe-struck ; being, however under no pressure of slavish terror, my thoughts and observations were free.

To speak truth, I was beginning to fancy that the old priest resembled that Père Silas, before whom I had kneeled in the church of the Béguinage. The idea was vague, for I had seen my confessor only in dusk and in profile, yet still I seemed to trace a likeness : I thought also I recognized the voice. While I watched him, he betrayed, by one lifted look, that he felt my scrutiny ; I turned to note the room ; that too had its half mystic interest.

Beside a cross of curiously carved old ivory, yel-

low with time, and sloped above a dark-red *prie-dieu*, furnished duly with rich missal and ebon rosary—hung the picture whose dim outline had drawn my eyes before—the picture which moved, fell away with the wall and let in phantoms. Imperfectly seen, I had taken it for a Madonna ; revealed by clearer light, it proved to be a woman's portrait in a nun's dress. The face, though not beautiful, was pleasing ; pale, young, and shaded with the dejection of grief or ill health. I say again it was not beautiful ; it was not even intellectual ; its very amiability was the amiability of a weak frame, inactive passions, acquiescent habits ; yet I looked long at that picture, and could not choose but look.

The old priest, who at first had seemed to me so deaf and infirm, must yet have retained his faculties in tolerable preservation ; absorbed in his book as he appeared, without once lifting his head, or, as far as I knew, turning his eyes, he perceived the point towards which my attention was drawn, and, in a slow, distinct voice, dropped concerning it, these four observations.

“ She was much beloved.

“ She gave herself to God.

"She died young.

"She is still remembered, still wept."

"By that aged lady, Madame Walravens?" I inquired, fancying that I had discovered in the incurable grief of bereavement, a key to that same aged lady's desperate ill-humour.

The father shook his head with half a smile.

"No, no;" said he, "a grand-dame's affection for her children's children may be great, and her sorrow for their loss, lively; but it is only the affianced lover, to whom Fate, Faith, and Death, have trebly denied the bliss of union, who mourns what he has lost, as Justine Marie is still mourned."

I thought the father rather wished to be questioned, and therefore I inquired who had lost and who still mourned "Justine Marie." I got, in reply, quite a little romantic narrative, told not unimpressively, with the accompaniment of the now subsiding storm. I am bound to say it might have been made much more truly impressive, if there had been less French, Rousseau-like sentimentalizing and wire-drawing; and rather more healthful carelessness of effect. But the worthy father was obviously a Frenchman born and bred (I became more and more persuaded of his resemblance to my confessor)

—he was a true son of Rome ; when he did lift his eyes, he looked at me out of their corners, with more and sharper subtlety than, one would have thought, could survive the wear and tear of seventy years. Yet, I believe, he was a good old man.

The hero of his tale was some former pupil of his, whom he now called his benefactor, and who, it appears, had loved this pale Justine Marie, the daughter of rich parents, at a time when his own worldly prospects were such as to justify his aspiring to a well-dowered hand. The pupil's father—once a rich banker—had failed, died, and left behind him only debts and destitution. The son was then forbidden to think of Marie, especially that old witch of a grand-dame I had seen, Madame Walravens, opposed the match with all the violence of a temper which deformity made sometimes demoniac. The mild Marie had neither the treachery to be false, nor the force to be quite staunch to her lover ; she gave up her first suitor, but, refusing to accept a second with a heavier purse, withdrew to a convent, and there died in her noviciate.

Lasting anguish, it seems, had taken possession of the faithful heart which worshipped her, and the truth of that love and grief had been shown



in a manner which touched even me, as I listened.

Some years after Justine Marie's death, ruin had come on her house too ; her father, by nominal calling a jeweller, but who also dealt a good deal on the Bourse, had been concerned in some financial transactions which entailed exposure and ruinous fines. He died of grief for the loss, and shame for the infamy. His old hunchbacked mother and his bereaved wife were left penniless, and might have died too, of want ; but their lost daughter's once-despised, yet most true-hearted suitor, hearing of the condition of these ladies, came with singular devotedness to the rescue. He took on their insolent pride the revenge of the purest charity—housing, caring for, befriending them, so as no son could have done it more tenderly and efficiently. The mother—on the whole a good woman—died blessing him ; the strange, godless, loveless, misanthrope grandmother lived still, entirely supported by this self-sacrificing man. She, who had been the bane of his life, blighting his hope, and awarding him, for love and domestic happiness, long mourning and cheerless solitude, he treated with the respect a good son might offer



a kind mother. He had brought her to this house, "and," continued the priest, while genuine tears rose to his eyes, "here, too, he shelters me, his old tutor, and Agnes, a superannuated servant of his father's family. To our sustenance, and to other charities, I know he devotes three parts of his income, keeping only the fourth to provide himself with bread and the most modest accommodations. By this arrangement he has rendered it impossible to himself ever to marry: he has given himself to God and to his angel-bride as much as if he were a priest, like me."

The father had wiped away his tears before he uttered these last words, and in pronouncing them, he for one instant raised his eyes to mine. I caught that glance, despite its veiled character; the momentary gleam shot a meaning which struck me.

These Romanists are strange beings. Such a one among them—whom you know no more than the last Inca of Peru, or the first Emperor of China—knows you and all your concerns; and has his reasons for saying to you so and so, when you simply thought the communication sprang impromptu from the instant's impulse: his plan in bringing it about that you shall come on such a day, to such a

place, under such and such circumstances, when the whole arrangement seems to your crude apprehension the ordinance of chance, or the sequel of exigency. Madame Beck's suddenly recollected message and present, my artless embassy to the Place of the Magi, the old priest, accidentally descending the steps and crossing the square, his interposition on my behalf with the *bonne* who would have sent me away, his reappearance on the staircase, my introduction to this room, the portrait, the narrative so affably volunteered—all these little incidents, taken as they fell out, seemed each independent of its successor; a handful of loose beads; but threaded through by that quick-shot and crafty glance of a Jesuit-eye, they dropped pendant in a long string, like that rosary on the *prie-dieu*. Where lay the link of junction, where the little clasp of this monastic necklace? I saw or felt union, but could not yet find the spot, or detect the means of connection.

Perhaps the musing-fit into which I had by this time fallen, appeared somewhat suspicious in its abstraction; he gently interrupted:

“*Mademoiselle*,” said he, “I trust you have not far to go through these inundated streets?”

“ More than half a league.”

“ You live—— ? ”

“ In the Rue Fossette.”

“ Not ” (with animation), “ not at the pensionnat of Madame Beck ? ”

“ The same.”

“ Done ” (clapping his hands), “ done, vous devez connaître mon noble élève, mon Paul ? ”

“ Monsieur Paul Emanuel, Professor of Literature ? ”

“ He, and none other.”

A brief silence fell. The spring of junction seemed suddenly to have become palpable ; I felt it yield to pressure.

“ Was it of M. Paul you have been speaking ? ” I presently inquired. “ Was he your pupil and the benefactor of Madame Walravens ? ”

“ Yes, and of Agnes, the old servant ; and moreover ” (with a certain emphasis), “ he was and *is* the lover, true, constant and eternal, of that saint in Heaven—Justine Marie.”

“ And who, father, are *you* ? ” I continued ; and though I accentuated the question, its utterance was well-nigh superfluous ; I was ere this quite prepared for the answer which actually came.

“ I, daughter, am Père Silas ; that unworthy son of Holy Church whom you once honoured with a noble and touching confidence, showing me the core of a heart, and the inner shrine of a mind whereof, in solemn truth, I coveted the direction, in behalf of the only true faith. Nor have I for a day lost sight of you, nor for an hour failed to take in you a rooted interest. Passed under the discipline of Rome, moulded by her high training, inoculated with her salutary doctrines, inspired by the zeal she alone gives—I realize what then might be your spiritual rank, your practical value; and I envy Heresy her prey.”

This struck me as a special state of things—I half-realized myself in that condition also; passed under discipline, moulded, trained, inoculated, and so on. “Not so,” thought I, but I restrained deprecation and sat quietly enough.

“ I suppose M. Paul does not live here ? ” I resumed, pursuing a theme which I thought more to the purpose than any wild renegade dreams.

“ No ; he only comes occasionally to worship his beloved saint, to make his confession to me, and to pay his respects to her he calls his mother. His own lodging consists but of two rooms ; he has no

servant, and yet he will not suffer Madame Walravens to dispose of those splendid jewels with which you see her adorned, and in which she takes a puerile pride as the ornaments of her youth, and the last relics of her son, the jeweller's wealth.

"How often," murmured I to myself, "has this man, this M. Emanuel, seemed to me to lack magnanimity in trifles, yet how great he is in great things!"

I own I did not reckon amongst the proofs of his greatness, either the act of confession, or the saint-worship.

"How long is it since that lady died?" I inquired, looking at Justine Marie.

"Twenty years. She was somewhat older than M. Emanuel; he was then very young, for he is not now much beyond forty."

"Does he yet weep her?"

"His heart will weep her always: the essence of Emanuel's nature is—constancy."

This was said with marked emphasis.

And now the sun broke out pallid and waterish; the rain yet fell, but there was no more tempest; that hot firmament had cloven and poured out its lightnings. A longer delay would scarce leave day-



ight for my return, so I rose, thanked the father for his hospitality and his tale, was benignantly answered by a "pax vobiscum," which I made kindly welcome, because it seemed uttered with a true benevolence; but I liked less the mystic phrase accompanying it:

"Daughter, you *shall* be what you *shall* be!" an oracle that made me shrug my shoulders as soon as I had got outside the door. Few of us know what we are to come to certainly, but for all that had happened yet, I had good hopes of living and dying a sober-minded protestant: there was a hollowness within, and a flourish around "Holy Church" which tempted me but moderately. I went on my way pondering many things. Whatever Romanism may be, there are good Romanists: this man, Emanuel, seemed of the best; touched with superstition, influenced by priestcraft, yet wondrous for fond faith, for pious devotion, for sacrifice of self, for charity unbounded. It remained to see how Rome, by her agents, handled such qualities; whether she cherished them for their own sake and for God's, or put them out to usury and made booty of the interest.

By the time I reached home, it was sundown.

Goton had kindly saved me a portion of dinner, which indeed I needed. She called me into the little cabinet to partake of it, and there Madame Beck soon made her appearance, bringing me a glass of wine.

“ Well,” began she, chuckling, “ and what sort of a reception did Madame Walravens give you ? Elle est drôle, n’est ce pas ? ”

I told her what had passed, delivering verbatim the courteous message with which I had been charged.

“ Oh la singulière petite bossue ! ” laughed she : “ Et figurez-vous qu’elle me déteste, parcequ’elle me croit amoureuse de mon cousin Paul ; ce petit devot qui n’ose pas bouger, à moins que son confesseur ne lui donne la permission ! Au reste ” (she went on), “ if he wanted to marry ever so much—soit moi, soit une autre—he could not do it ; he has too large a family already on his hands ; Mère Walravens, Père Silas, Dame Agnes, and a whole troop of nameless paupers. There never was a man like him for laying on himself burdens greater than he can bear, voluntarily incurring needless responsibilities. Besides, he harbours a romantic idea about some pale-faced Marie Justine—personnage assez

niaise á ce que je pense" (such was Madame's irreverent remark), "who has been an angel in Heaven, or elsewhere, this score of years, and to whom he means to go, free from all earthly ties, pure comme un lis, á ce qu'il dit. Oh, you would laugh could you but know half M. Emanuel's crotchets and eccentricities ! But I hinder you from taking refreshment, ma bonne meess, which you must need ; eat your supper, drink your wine, oubliez les anges, les bossues, et surtout, les Professeurs — et bon soir !"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## FRATERNITY.

“OUBLIEZ les Professeurs.” So said Madame Beck. Madame Beck was a wise woman, but she should not have uttered those words. To do so was a mistake. That night she should have left me calm—not excited, indifferent, not interested, isolated in my own estimation and that of others—not connected, even in idea, with this second person whom I was to forget.

Forget him? Ah! they took a sage plan to make me forget him—the wiseheads! They showed me how good he was; they made of my dear little man a stainless little hero. And then they had prated about his manner of loving. What means had I, before this day, of being certain whether he could love at all or not?

I had known him jealous, suspicious; I had seen

about him certain tendernesses, fitfulnesses—a softness which came like a warm air, and a ruth which passed like early dew, dried in the heat of his irritabilities: *this* was all I had seen. And they, Père Silas and Modeste Maria Beck (that these two wrought in concert I could not doubt) opened up the adytum of his heart—shewed me one grand love, the child of this southern nature's youth, born so strong and perfect, that it had laughed at Death himself, despised his mean rape of matter, clung to immortal spirit, and, in victory and faith, had watched beside a tomb twenty years.

This had been done—not idly: this was not a mere hollow indulgence of sentiment; he had proven his fidelity by the consecration of his best energies to an unselfish purpose, and attested it by limitless personal sacrifices: for those once dear to her he prized—he had laid down vengeance, and taken up a cross.

Now, as for Justine Marie, I knew what she was as well as if I had seen her. I knew she was well enough; there were girls like her in Madame Beck's school—phlegmatics—pale, slow, inert, but kind-natured, neutral of evil, undistinguished for good.



If she wore angels' wings, I knew whose poet-fancy conferred them. If her forehead shone luminous with the reflex of a halo, I knew in the fire of whose irids that circlet of holy flame had generation.

Was I, then, to be frightened by Justine Marie? Was the picture of a pale dead nun to rise, an eternal barrier? And what of the charities which absorbed his worldly goods? What of his heart, sworn to virginity?

Madame Beck—Père Silas—you should not have suggested these questions. They were at once the deepest puzzle, the strongest obstruction, and the keenest stimulus, I had ever felt. For a week of nights and days I fell asleep—I dreamt, and I woke upon these two questions. In the whole world there was no answer to them, except where one dark little man stood, sat, walked, lectured, under the head-piece of a bandit bonnet-grec, and within the girth of a sorry paletôt, much be-inked, and no little adust.

After that visit to the Rue des Mages, I *did* want to see him again. I felt as if—knowing what I now knew—his countenance would offer a page more lucid, more interesting than ever; I felt a longing to trace in it the imprint of that primitive devoted-

ness, the signs of that half-knightly, half-saintly chivalry which the priest's narrative imputed to his nature. He had become my Christian hero: under that character I wanted to view him.

Nor was opportunity slow to favour: my new impressions underwent her test the next day. Yes: I was granted an interview with my "Christian hero"—an interview not very heroic, or sentimental, or biblical, but lively enough in its way.

About three o'clock of the afternoon, the peace of the first classe—safely established, as it seemed, under the serene sway of Madame Beck, who, in *propria persona*, was giving one of her orderly and useful lessons—this peace, I say, suffered a sudden fracture by the wild inburst of a paletot.

Nobody at the moment was quieter than myself. Eased of responsibility by Madame Beck's presence, soothed by her uniform tones, pleased and edified with her clear exposition of the subject in hand (for she taught well), I sat bent over my desk, drawing—that is, copying an elaborate line engraving, tediously working up my copy to the finish of the original, for that was my practical notion of art; and, strange to say, I took extreme pleasure in the labour, and could even produce curiously finical Chinese fac-

similes of steel or mezzotint plates—things about as valuable as so many achievements in worsted-work, but I thought pretty well of them in those days.

What was the matter? My drawing, my pencils, my precious copy, gathered into one crushed-up handful, perished from before my sight; I myself appeared to be shaken or emptied out of my chair, as a solitary and withered nutmeg might be emptied out of a spice-box by an excited cook. That chair, and my desk, seized by the wild paletot, one under each sleeve, were borne afar; in a second, I followed the furniture; in two minutes they and I were fixed in the centre of the grand salle—a vast adjoining room, seldom used save for dancing and choral singing-lessons—fixed with an emphasis which seemed to prohibit the remotest hope of our ever being permitted to stir thence again.

Having partially collected my scared wits, I found myself in the presence of two men—gentlemen, I suppose I should say—one dark, the other light—one having a stiff, half-military air, and wearing a braided surtout; the other partaking, in garb and bearing, more of the careless aspect of the student or artist class: both flourishing in full magnificence of moustaches, whiskers, and imperial. M. Ema-

nuel stood a little apart from these ; his countenance and eyes expressed strong choler ; he held forth his hand with his tribune gesture.

“ Mademoiselle,” said he, “ your business is to prove to these gentlemen that I am no liar. You will answer, to the best of your ability, such questions as they shall put. You will also write on such theme as they shall select. In their eyes, it appears I hold the position of an unprincipled impostor. I write essays ; and, with deliberate forgery, sign to them my pupils’ names, and boast of them as their work. You will disprove this charge.”

Grand Ciel ! Here was the show-trial, so long evaded, come on me like a thunder-clap. These two fine, braided, moustachioed, sneering personages, were none other than dandy professors of the college—Messieurs Boisseac and Rochemorte—a pair of cold-blooded fops and pedants, sceptics, and scoffers. It seems that M. Paul had been rashly exhibiting something I had written—something he had never once praised, or even mentioned, in my hearing, and which I deemed forgotten. The essay was not remarkable at all ; it only *seemed* remarkable, compared with the average productions of foreign school-girls ; in an English establishment it

would have passed scarce noticed. Messrs. Boisseac and Rochemorte had thought proper to question its genuineness, and insinuate a cheat; I was now to bear my testimony to the truth, and to be put to the torture of their examination.

A memorable scene ensued.

They began with classics. A dead blank. They went on to French history. I hardly knew Mérovée from Pharamond. They tried me in various 'ologies, and still only got a shake of the head, and an unchanging "Je n'en sais rien."

After an expressive pause, they proceeded to matters of general information, broaching one or two subjects which I knew pretty well, and on which I had often reflected. M. Emanuel, who had hitherto stood looking on, dark as the winter-solstice, brightened up somewhat; he thought I should now show myself at least no fool.

He learned his error. Though answers to the questions surged up fast, my mind filling like a rising well, ideas were there, but not words. I either *could* not, or *would* not speak—I am not sure which: partly, I think my nerves had got wrong, and partly my humour was crossed.

I heard one of my examiners—he of the braided



surtout — whisper to his co-professor: “Est-elle donc idiote?”

“Yes,” I thought, “an idiot she is, and always will be, for such as you.”

But I suffered—suffered cruelly; I saw the damp gather on M. Paul’s brow, and his eye spoke a passionate yet sad reproach. He would not believe in my total lack of popular cleverness; he thought I *could* be prompt if I *would*.

At last, to relieve him, the professors, and myself, I stammered out:

“Gentlemen, you had better let me go; you will get no good of me; as you say, I am an idiot.”

I wish I could have spoken with calm and dignity, or I wish my sense had sufficed to make me hold my tongue; that traitor tongue tripped, faltered. Beholding the judges cast on M. Emanuel a hard look of triumph, and hearing the distressed tremor of my own voice, out I burst in a fit of choking tears. The emotion was far more of anger than grief; had I been a man and strong, I could have challenged that pair on the spot—but it *was* emotion, and I would rather have been scourged, than betrayed it.

The incapables! Could they not see at once the

crude hand of a novice in that composition they called a forgery? The subject was classical. When M. Paul dictated the trait on which the essay was to turn, I heard it for the first time; the matter was new to me, and I had no material for its treatment. But I got books, read up the facts, laboriously constructed a skeleton out of the dry bones of the real, and then clothed them, and tried to breathe into them life, and in this last aim I had pleasure. With me it was a difficult and anxious time till my facts were found, selected, and properly jointed; nor could I rest from research and effort till I was satisfied of correct anatomy; the strength of my inward repugnance to the idea of flaw or falsity sometimes enabled me to shun egregious blunders; but the knowledge was not there in my head, ready and mellow; it had not been sown in Spring, grown in Summer, harvested in Autumn, and garnered through Winter; whatever I wanted I must go out and gather fresh; glean of wild herbs my lap full, and shred them green into the pot. Messieurs Boisseac and Rochemorte did not perceive this. They mistook my work for the work of a ripe scholar.

They would not yet let me go: I must sit down

and write before them. As I dipped my pen in the ink with a shaking hand, and surveyed the white paper with eyes half-blinded and overflowing, one of my judges began mincingly to apologize for the pain he caused.

“ Nous agissons dans l'intêret de la verité. Nous ne voulons pas vous blesser,” said he.

Scorn gave me nerve. I only answered,—

“ Dictate, Monsieur.”

Rochemorte named this theme: “ Human Justice.”

Human Justice! What was I to make of it? Blank, cold abstraction, unsuggestive to me of one inspiring idea; and there stood M. Emanuel, sad as Saul, and stern as Joab, and there triumphed his accusers.

At these two I looked. I was gathering my courage to tell them that I would neither write nor speak another word for their satisfaction, that their theme did not suit, nor their presence inspire me, and that, notwithstanding, whoever threw the shadow of a doubt on M. Emanuel's honour, outraged that truth of which they had announced themselves the champions: I *meant* to utter all this, I say, when, suddenly, a light darted on memory.

Those two faces looking out of the forest of long hair, moustache, and whisker—those two cold yet bold, trustless yet presumptuous visages—were the same faces, the very same that, projected in full gas-light from behind the pillars of a portico, had half frightened me to death on the night of my desolate arrival in Villette. These, I felt morally certain, were the very heroes who had driven a friendless foreigner beyond her reckoning and her strength, chased her breathless over a whole quarter of the town.

“Pious mentors!” thought I. “Pure guides for youth! If ‘Human Justice’ were what she ought to be, you two would scarce hold your present post, or enjoy your present credit.”

An idea once seized, I fell to work. “Human Justice” rushed before me in novel guise, a red, random beldame with arms akimbo. I saw her in her house, the den of confusion: servants called to her for orders or help which she did not give; beggars stood at her door waiting and starving unnoticed; a swarm of children, sick and quarrelsome, crawled round her feet and yelled in her ears. appeals for notice, sympathy, cure, redress. The honest woman cared for none of these things. She

had a warm seat of her own by the fire, she had her own solace in a short black pipe, and a bottle of Mrs. Sweeny's soothing syrup; she smoked and she sipped and she enjoyed her paradise, and whenever a cry of the suffering souls about her pierced her ears too keenly—my jolly dame seized the poker or the hearth-brush: if the offender was weak, wronged, and sickly, she effectually settled him; if he was strong, lively, and violent, she only menaced, then plunged her hand in her deep pouch, and flung a liberal shower of sugar-plums.

Such was the sketch of "Human Justice," scratched hurriedly on paper, and placed at the service of Messrs. Boisse and Rochemorte. M. Emanuel read it over my shoulder. Waiting no comment, I curtsied to the trio, and withdrew.

After school that day, M. Paul and I again met. Of course the meeting did not at first run smooth; there was a crow to pluck with him: that forced examination could not be immediately digested. A crabbed dialogue terminated in my being called, "*une petite moqueuse et sans-cœur*," and in Monsieur's temporary departure.

Not wishing him to go quite away, only desiring he should feel that such a transport as he had that



day given way to, could not be indulged with perfect impunity, I was not sorry to see him, soon after, gardening in the berceau. He approached the glass door; I drew near also. We spoke of some flowers growing round it. By-and-by Monsieur laid down his spade; by-and-by he recommenced conversation, passed to other subjects, and at last touched a point of interest.

Conscious that his proceeding of that day was specially open to a charge of extravagance, M. Paul half apologized; he half regretted too the fitfulness of his moods at all times, yet he hinted that some allowance ought to be made for him. "But," said he, "I can hardly expect it at your hands, Miss Lucy; you know neither me, nor my position, nor my history."

His history. I took up the word at once; I pursued the idea.

"No, monsieur," I rejoined. "Of course, as you say, I know neither your history, nor your position, nor your sacrifices, nor any of your sorrows, or trials, or affections, or fidelities. Oh, no! I know nothing about you; you are for me altogether a stranger."

"Hein?" he murmured, arching his brows in surprise.

“ You know, monsieur, I only see you in classe—stern, dogmatic, hasty, imperious. I only hear of you in town as active and wilful, quick to originate, hasty to lead, but slow to persuade, and hard to bend. A man like you, without ties, can have no attachments ; without dependents, no duties. All we, with whom you come in contact, are machines, which you thrust here and here, inconsiderate of their feelings. You seek your recreations in public, by the light of the evening chandelier : this school and yonder college are your workshops, where you fabricate the ware called pupils. I don’t so much as know where you live ; it is natural to take it for granted that you have no home, and need none.”

“ I am judged,” said he. “ Your opinion of me is just what I thought it was. For you—I am neither a man nor a Christian. You see me void of affection and religion, unattached by friend or family, unpiloted by principle or faith. It is well, mademoiselle, such is our reward in this life.”

“ You are a philosopher, monsieur ; a cynic philosopher ” (and I looked at his paletôt, of which he straightway brushed the dim sleeve with his hand), “ despising the foibles of humanity—above its luxuries—independent of its comforts.”

“Et vous, mademoiselle ; vous êtes proprette et douillette, et affreusement insensible, par-dessus le marché.”

“But, in short, monsieur, now I think of it, you *must* live somewhere? Do tell me where ; and what establishment of servants do you keep?”

With a fearful projection of the under lip, implying an impetus of scorn the most decided, he broke out—

“Je vis dans un trou ! I inhabit a den, miss—a cavern, where you would not put your dainty nose. Once, with base shame of speaking the whole truth, I talked about my ‘study’ in that college: know now that this ‘study’ is my whole abode ; my chamber is there and my drawing-room. As for my ‘establishment of servants’” (mimicking my voice) “they number ten : les voilà !”

And he grimly spread, close under my eyes, his ten fingers.

“I black my boots,” pursued he, savagely. “I brush my paletôt.”

“No, monsieur, it is too plain ; you never do that,” was my parenthesis.

“Je fais mon lit et mon ménage ; I seek my dinner in a restaurant ; my supper takes care of

itself; I pass days laborious and loveless; nights long and lonely; I am ferocious, and bearded, and monkish; and nothing now living in this world loves me, except some old hearts worn like my own, and some few beings, impoverished, suffering, poor in purse and in spirit, whom the kingdoms of this world own not, but to whom a will and testament not to be disputed, has bequeathed the kingdom of heaven."

"Ah, monsieur; but I know!"

"What do you know? many things, I verily believe; yet not me, Lucy!"

"I know that you have a pleasant old house in a pleasant old square of the Basse-Ville—why don't you go and live there?"

"Hein?" muttered he again.

"I liked it much, monsieur; with the steps ascending to the door, the gray flags in front, the nodding trees behind—real trees, not shrubs—trees dark, high, and of old growth. And the *boudoir-oratoire*—you should make that room your study; it is so quiet and solemn."

He eyed me closely; he half-smiled, half-coloured. "Where did you pick up all that? Who told you?" he asked.

“Nobody told me. Did I dream it, monsieur, do you think?”

“Can I enter into your visions? Can I guess a woman’s waking thoughts, much less her sleeping fantasies?”

“If I dreamt it, I saw in my dream human beings as well as a house. I saw a priest, old, bent, and gray, and a domestic—old, too, and picturesque; and a lady, splendid but strange; her head would scarce reach to my elbow—her magnificence might ransom a duke. She wore a gown bright as lapis-lazuli—a shawl worth a thousand francs: she was decked with ornaments so brilliant, I never saw any with such a beautiful sparkle; but her figure looked as if it had been broken in two and bent double; she seemed also to have outlived the common years of humanity, and to have attained those which are only labour and sorrow. She was become morose—almost malevolent; yet *somebody*, it appears, cared for her in her infirmities—somebody forgave her trespasses, hoping to have his trespasses forgiven. They lived together, these three people—the mistress, the chaplain, the servant—all old, all feeble, all sheltered under one kind wing.”

He covered with his hand the upper part of his



face, but did not conceal his mouth, where I saw hovering an expression I liked.

“ I see you have entered into my secrets,” said he, “ but how was it done ? ”

So I told him how—the commission on which I had been sent, the storm which had detained me, the abruptness of the lady, the kindness of the priest. “ As I sat waiting for the rain to cease, Père Silas whiled away the time with a story,” I said.

“ A story ! What story ? Père Silas is no romancist.”

“ Shall I tell monsieur the tale ? ”

“ Yes : begin at the beginning. Let me hear some of Miss Lucy’s French—her best or her worst—I don’t much care which : let us have a good poignée of barbarisms, and a bounteous dose of the insular accent.”

“ Monsieur is not going to be gratified by a tale of ambitious proportions, and the spectacle of the narrator sticking fast in the midst. But I will tell him the title—‘ The Priest’s Pupil.’ ”

“ Bah ! ” said he, the swarthy flush again dyeing his dark cheek. “ The good old father could not have chosen a worst subject : it is his weak point. But what of ‘ The Priest’s Pupil ’ ? ”

“ Oh ! many things.”

“ You may as well define *what* things. I mean to know.”

“ There was the pupil’s youth, the pupil’s manhood—his avarice, his ingratitude, his implacability, his inconstancy. Such a bad pupil, monsieur !—so thankless, cold-hearted, unchivalrous, unforgiving !”

“ Et puis ?” said he, taking a cigar.

“ Et puis,” I pursued, “ he underwent calamities which one did not pity—bore them in a spirit one did not admire—endured wrongs for which one felt no sympathy ; finally, took the unchristian revenge of heaping coals of fire on his adversary’s head.”

“ You have not told me all,” said he.

“ Nearly all, I think : I have indicated the beads of Père Silas’s chapters.”

“ You have forgotten one—that which touched on the pupil’s lack of affection—on his hard, cold, monkish heart.”

“ True ; I remember now. Père Silas *did* say that his vocation was almost that of a priest—that his life was considered consecrated.”

“ By what bonds or duties ?”

“ By the ties of the past and the charities of the present.”

“ You have, then, the whole situation ? ”

“ I have now told monsieur all that was told me.”

Some meditative minutes passed.

“ Now, Mademoiselle Lucy, look at me, and with that truth which I believe you never knowingly violate, answer me one question. Raise your eyes ; rest them on mine ; have no hesitation ; fear not to trust me—I am a man to be trusted.”

I raised my eyes.

“ Knowing me thoroughly now—all my antecedents, all my responsibilities—having long known my faults, can you and I still be friends ? ”

“ If monsieur wants a friend in me, I shall be glad to have a friend in him.”

“ But a close friend I mean—intimate and real—kindred in all but blood ? Will Miss Lucy be the sister of a very poor, fettered, burdened, encumbered man ? ”

I could not answer him in words, yet I suppose I *did* answer him ; he took my hand, which found comfort in the shelter of his. *His* friendship was not a doubtful, wavering benefit—a cold, distant hope—a sentiment so brittle as not to bear the weight of a finger : I at once felt (or *thought* I felt) its support like that of some rock.

“When I talk of friendship, I mean *true* friendship,” he repeated emphatically; and I could hardly believe that words so earnest had blessed my ear; I hardly could credit the reality of that kind, anxious look he gave. If he *really* wished for my confidence and regard, and *really* would give me his—why, it seemed to me that life could offer nothing more or better. In that case, I was become strong and rich: in a moment I was made substantially happy. To ascertain the fact, to fix and seal it, I asked—

“Is monsieur quite serious? Does he really think he needs me, and can take an interest in me as a sister?”

“Surely, surely,” said he; “a lonely man like me, who has no sister, must be but too glad to find in some woman’s heart a sister’s pure affection.”

“And dare I rely on monsieur’s regard? Dare I speak to him when I am so inclined?”

“My little sister must make her own experiments,” said he; “I will give no promises. She must tease and try her wayward brother till she has drilled him into what she wishes. After all, he is no inductile material in some hands.”

While he spoke, the tone of his voice, the light of his now affectionate eye, gave me such a pleasure as, certainly, I had never felt. I envied no girl her lover, no bride her bridegroom, no wife her husband; I was content with this my voluntary, self-offering friend. If he would but prove reliable, and he *looked* reliable, what, beyond his friendship, could I ever covet? But, if all melted like a dream, as once before had happened ——?

“Qu'est-ce donc? What is it?” said he, as this thought threw its weight on my heart, its shadow on my countenance. I told him; and after a moment's pause, and a thoughtful smile, he showed me how an equal fear—lest I should weary of him, a man of moods so difficult and fitful—had haunted his mind for more than one day, or one month.

On hearing this, a quiet courage cheered me. I ventured a word of re-assurance. That word was not only tolerated; its repetition was courted. I grew quite happy—strangely happy—in making him secure, content, tranquil. Yesterday, I could not have believed that earth held, or life afforded, moments like the few I was now passing. Countless times it had been my lot to watch apprehended



sorrow close darkly in ; but to see unhopèd-for happiness take form, find place, and grow more real as the seconds sped, was indeed a new experience.

“ Lucy,” said M. Paul, speaking low and still holding my hand, “ did you see a picture in the boudoir of the old house ? ”

“ I did ; a picture painted on a panel.”

“ The portrait of a nun ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You heard her history ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You remember what we saw that night in the *berceau* ? ”

“ I shall never forget it.”

“ You did not connect the two ideas ; that would be folly ? ”

“ I thought of the apparition when I saw the portrait,” said I ; which was true enough.

“ You did not, nor will you fancy,” pursued he, “ that a saint in Heaven perturbs herself with rivalries of earth ? Protestants are rarely superstitious ; these morbid fancies will not beset you ? ”

“ I know not what to think of this matter ; but

I believe a perfectly natural solution of this seeming mystery will one day be arrived at."

"Doubtless, doubtless. Besides, no good living woman—much less a pure, happy spirit—would trouble amity like ours—*n'est il pas vrai ?*"

Ere I could answer, Fifine Beck burst in, rosy and abrupt, calling out that I was wanted. Her mother was going into town to call on some English family, who had applied for a prospectus: my services were needed as interpreter. The interruption was not unseasonable: sufficient for the day is always the evil; for this hour, its good sufficed. Yet I should have liked to ask M. Paul whether the "morbid fancies," against which he warned me, wrought in his own brain.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE APPLE OF DISCORD.

BESIDES Fifine Beck's mother, another power had a word to say to M. Paul and me, before that covenant of friendship could be ratified. We were under the surveillance of a sleepless eye : Rome watched jealously her son through that mystic lattice at which I had knelt once, and to which M. Emanuel drew nigh month by month—the sliding panel of the confessional.

“ Why were you so glad to be friends with M. Paul ? ” asks the reader. “ Had he not long been a friend to you ? Had he not given proof on proof of a certain partiality in his feelings ? ”

Yes, he had ; but still I liked to hear him say so earnestly—that he was my close, true friend ; I liked his modest doubts, his tender deference—that trust which longed to rest, and was grateful

when taught how. He had called me "sister." It was well. Yes; he might call me what he pleased, so long as he confided in me. I was willing to be his sister, on condition that he did not invite me to fill that relation to some future wife of his; and tacitly vowed as he was to celibacy, of this dilemma there seemed little danger.

Through most of the succeeding night, I pondered that evening's interview. I wanted much the morning to break, and then listened for the bell to ring; and, after rising and dressing, I deemed prayers and breakfast slow, and all the hours lingering, till that arrived at last which brought the lesson of literature. My wish was to get a more thorough comprehension of this fraternal alliance: to note with how much of the brother he would demean himself when we met again; to prove how much of the sister was in my own feelings; to discover whether I could summon a sister's courage, and he a brother's frankness.

He came. Life is so constructed, that the event does not, cannot, will not, match the expectation. That whole day he never accosted me. His lesson was given rather more quietly than usual, more mildly, and also more gravely. He was fatherly to

his pupils, but he was not brotherly to me. Ere he left the classe, I expected a smile, if not a word ; I got neither : to my portion fell one nod—hurried, shy.

This distance, I argued, is accidental—it is involuntary ; patience, and it will vanish. It vanished not ; it continued for days ; it increased. I suppressed my surprise, and swallowed whatever other feelings began to surge.

Well might I ask when he offered fraternity—“ Dare I rely on you ? ” Well might he, doubtless knowing himself, withhold all pledge. True, he had bid me make my own experiments—tease and try him. Vain injunction ! Privilege nominal and unavailable ! Some women might use it ! Nothing in my powers or instinct placed me amongst this brave band. Left alone, I was passive ; repulsed, I withdrew ; forgotten—my lips would not utter, nor my eyes dart a reminder. It seemed there had been an error somewhere in my calculations, and I waited for time to disclose it.

But the day came when, as usual, he was to give me a lesson. One evening in seven he had long generously bestowed on me, devoting it to the



examination of what had been done in various studies during the past week, and to the preparation of work for the week in prospect. On these occasions my school-room was anywhere, wherever the pupils and the other teachers happened to be, or in their close vicinage, very often in the large second division, where it was easy to choose a quiet nook when the crowding day-pupils were absent, and the few boarders gathered in a knot about the surveillante's estrade.

On the customary evening, hearing the customary hour strike, I collected my books and papers, my pen and ink, and sought the large division.

In classe there was no one, and it lay all in cool deep shadow ; but through the open double doors was seen the carré, filled with pupils and with light ; over hall and figures blushed the westering sun. It blushed so ruddily and vividly, that the hues of the walls and the variegated tints of the dresses seemed all fused in one warm glow. The girls were seated, working or studying ; in the midst of their circle stood M. Emanuel, speaking good-humouredly to a teacher. His dark paletot, his jetty hair, were tinged with many a reflex of crimson ; his Spanish face, when he turned it momentarily, answered the

sun's animated kiss with an animated smile. I took my place at a desk.

The orange-trees, and several plants, full and bright with bloom, basked also in the sun's laughing bounty; they had partaken it the whole day, and now asked water. M. Emanuel had a taste for gardening; he liked to tend and foster plants. I used to think that working amongst shrubs with a spade or a watering-pot soothed his nerves; it was a recreation to which he often had recourse; and now he looked to the orange-trees, the geraniums, the gorgeous cactuses, and revived them all with the refreshment their drought needed. His lips meantime sustained his precious cigar, that (for him) first necessary and prime luxury of life; its blue wreaths curled prettily enough amongst the flowers, and in the evening light. He spoke no more to the pupils, nor to the mistresses, but gave many an endearing word to a small spanieless (if one may coin a word), that nominally belonged to the house, but virtually owned him as master, being fonder of him than of any inmate. A delicate, silky, loving, and loveable little doggie she was, trotting at his side, looking with expressive, attached eyes into his face; and whenever he dropped his bonnet-grec

or his handkerchief, which he occasionally did in play, crouching beside it with the air of a miniature lion guarding a kingdom's flag.

There were many plants, and as the amateur gardener fetched all the water from the well in the court, with his own active hands, his work spun out to some length. The great school-clock ticked on. Another hour struck. The carré and the youthful group lost the illusion of sunset. Day was drooping. My lesson, I perceived, must to-night be very short; but the orange-trees, the cacti, the camelias were all served now. Was it my turn?

Alas! in the garden were more plants to be looked after,—favourite rose-bushes, certain choice flowers; little Sylvie's glad bark and whine followed the receding paletot down the alleys. I put up some of my books; I should not want them all; I sat and thought, and waited, involuntarily deprecating the creeping invasion of twilight.

Sylvie, gaily frisking, emerged into view once more, heralding the returning paletot; the watering-pot was deposited beside the well; it had fulfilled its office; how glad I was! Monsieur washed his hands in a little stone bowl. There was no longer time for a lesson now; ere long the prayer-

bell must ring ; but still we should meet ; he would speak ; a chance would be offered of reading in his eyes the riddle [of his shyness. His ablutions over, he stood, slowly re-arranging his cuffs, looking at the horn of a young moon, set pale in the opal sky, and glimmering faint on the oriel of Jean Baptiste. Sylvie watched the mood contemplative ; its stillness irked her ; she whined and jumped to break it. He looked down.

“ *Petite exigeante !*” said he ; “ you must not be forgotten one moment, it seems.”

He stooped, lifted her in his arms, sauntered across the court, within a yard of the line of windows near one of which I sat : he sauntered lingeringly, fondling the spaniel in his bosom, calling her tender names in a tender voice. On the front-door steps he turned ; once again he looked at the moon, at the gray cathedral, over the remoter spires and house-roofs fading into a blue sea of night-mist ; he tasted the sweet breath of dusk, and noted the folded bloom of the garden ; he suddenly looked round ; a keen beam out of his eye rased the white façade of the classes, swept the long line of *croisées*. I think he bowed ; if he did, I had no time to return the courtesy. In a moment he was gone ;



the moonlit threshold lay pale and shadowless before the closed front-door.

Gathering in my arms all that was spread on the desk before me, I carried back the unused heap to its place in the third classe. The prayer-bell rang ; I obeyed its summons.

The morrow would not restore him to the Rue Fossette, that day being devoted entirely to his college. I got through my teaching ; I got over the intermediate hours ; I saw evening approaching, and armed myself for its heavy ennui. Whether it was worse to stay with my co-inmates, or to sit alone, I had not considered ; I naturally took up the latter alternative ; if there was a hope of comfort for any moment, the heart or head of no human being in this house could yield it ; only under the lid of my desk could it harbour, nestling between the leaves of some book, gilding a pencil-point, the nib of a pen, or tinging the black fluid in that ink-glass. With a heavy heart I opened my desk-lid ; with a weary hand I turned up its contents.

One by one, well-accustomed books, volumes sewn in familiar covers, were taken out and put back hopeless ; they had no charm ; they could not comfort. Is this something new, this pamphlet in



lilac? I have not seen it before, and I re-arranged my desk this very day—this very afternoon; the tract must have been introduced within the last hour, while we were at dinner.

I opened it. What was it? What would it say to me?

It was neither tale nor poem, neither essay nor history; it neither sung, nor related, nor discussed. It was a theological work; it preached and it persuaded.

I lent to it my ear very willingly, for, small as it was, it possessed its own spell, and bound my attention at once. It preached Romanism; it persuaded to conversion. The voice of that sly little book was a honied voice; its accents were all unction and balm. Here roared no utterance of Rome's thunders, no blasting of the breath of her displeasure. The Protestant was to turn Papist, not so much in fear of the heretic's hell, as on account of the comfort, the indulgence, the tenderness Holy Church offered: far be it from her to threaten or to coerce; her wish was to guide and win. *She* persecute? Oh dear no! not on any account!

This meek volume was not addressed to the hardened and worldly; it was not even strong

meat for the strong: it was milk for babes; the mild effluence of a mother's love towards her tenderest and her youngest; intended wholly and solely for those whose head is to be reached through the heart. Its appeal was not to intellect; it sought to win the affectionate through their affections, the sympathizing through their sympathies: St. Vincent de Paul, gathering his orphans about him, never spoke more sweetly.

I remember one capital inducement to apostacy was held out in the fact that a Catholic who had lost dear friends by death could enjoy the unspeakable solace of praying them out of purgatory. The writer did not touch on the firmer peace of those whose belief dispenses with purgatory altogether; but I thought of this, and, on the whole, preferred the latter doctrine as the most consolatory.

The little book amused, and did not painfully displease me. It was a canting, sentimental, shallow little book, yet something about it cheered my gloom and made me smile; I was amused with the gambols of this unlicked wolf-cub muffled in the fleece, and mimicking the bleat of a guileless lamb. Portions of it reminded me of certain Wesleyan Methodist tracts I had once read when a child; they

were flavoured with about the same seasoning of excitation to fanaticism. He that had written it was no bad man, and while perpetually betraying the trained cunning—the cloven hoof of his system—I should pause before accusing himself of insincerity. His judgment, however, wanted surgical props; it was rickety.

I smiled then over this dose of maternal tenderness, coming from the ruddy old lady of the Seven Hills; smiled, too, at my own disinclination, not to say disability, to meet these melting favours. Glancing at the title-page, I found the name of “Père Silas.” A fly-leaf bore in small, but clear and well-known pencil characters: “From P. C. D. E. to L—y.” And when I saw this I laughed; but not in my former spirit. I was revived.

A mortal bewilderment cleared suddenly from my head and vision; the solution of the Sphinx-riddle was won; the conjunction of those two names, Père Silas and Paul Emanuel, gave the key to all. The penitent had been with his director; permitted to withhold nothing; suffered to keep no corner of his heart sacred to God and to himself; the whole narrative of our late interview had been drawn from him; he had avowed the covenant of fraternity, and spoken

of his adopted sister. How could such covenant, such adoption, be sanctioned by the Church? Fraternal communion with a heretic! I seemed to hear Père Silas annulling the unholy pact; warning his penitent of its perils; entreating, enjoining reserve, nay, by the authority of his office, and in the name, and by the memory of all M. Emanuel held most dear and sacred, commanding the enforcement of that new system whose frost had pierced to the marrow of my bones.

These may not seem pleasant hypotheses; yet, by comparison, they were welcome. The vision of a ghostly troubler hovering in the background, was as nothing, matched with the fear of spontaneous change arising in M. Paul himself.

At this distance of time, I cannot be sure how far the above conjectures were self-suggested: or in what measure they owed their origin and confirmation to another quarter. Help was not wanting.

This evening there was no bright sunset; west and east were one cloud; no summer night-mist, blue, yet rose-tinged, softened the distance; a clammy fog from the marshes crept gray round Villette. To-night the watering-pot might rest in its niche by the well; a small rain had been



drizzling all the afternoon, and still it fell fast and quietly. This was no weather for rambling in the wet alleys, under the dripping trees; and I started to hear Sylvie's sudden bark in the garden—her bark of welcome. Surely she was not accompanied; and yet this glad, quick bark was never uttered, save in homage to one presence.

Through the glass-door and the arching *berceau*, I commanded the deep vista of the *allée défendue*: thither rushed Sylvie, glistening through its gloom like a white guelder-rose. She ran to and fro, whining, springing, harassing little birds amongst the bushes. I watched five minutes; no fulfilment followed the omen. I returned to my books: Sylvie's sharp bark suddenly ceased. Again I looked up. She was standing not many yards distant, wagging her white, feathery tail as fast as the muscle would work, and intently watching the operations of a spade, plied fast by an indefatigable hand. There was M. Emanuel, bent over the soil, digging in the wet mould amongst the rain-laden and streaming shrubs, working as hard as if his day's pittance were yet to earn by the literal sweat of his brow.

In this sign I read a ruffled mood. He would dig thus in frozen snow on the coldest winter day,



when urged inwardly by painful emotion, whether of nervous excitation, or sad thoughts, or self-reproach. He would dig, by the hour, with knit brow and set teeth, nor once lift his head, or open his lips.

Sylvie watched till she was tired. Again scampering devious, bounding here, rushing there, snuffing and sniffing everywhere; she at last discovered me in classe. Instantly she flew barking at the panes, as if to urge me forth to share her pleasure or her master's toil; she had seen me occasionally walking in that alley with M. Paul; and I doubt not. considered it my duty to join him now, wet as it was.

She made such a bustle that M. Paul at last looked up, and of course perceived why, and at whom she barked. He whistled to call her off; she only barked the louder. She seemed quite bent upon having the glass-door opened. Tired, I suppose, with her importunity, he threw down his spade, approached, and pushed the door a-jar. Sylvie burst in all impetuous, sprang to my lap, and with her paws at my neck, and her little nose and tongue somewhat overpoweringly busy about my face, mouth, and eyes, flourished her bushy tail over

the desk, and scattered books and papers far and wide.

M. Emanuel advanced to still the clamour and repair the disarrangement. Having gathered up the books, he captured Sylvie, and stowed her away under his paletôt, where she nestled as quiet as a mouse, her head just peeping forth. She was very tiny, and had the prettiest little innocent face, the silkiest long ears, the finest dark eyes in the world. I never saw her, but I thought of Paulina de Bassompierre : forgive the association, reader, it *would* occur.

M. Paul petted and patted her ; the endearments she received were not to be wondered at ; she invited affection by her beauty and her vivacious life.

While caressing the spaniel, his eye roved over the papers and books just replaced ; it settled on the religious tract. His lips moved ; he half-checked the impulse to speak. What ! had he promised never to address me more ? If so, his better nature pronounced the vow " more honoured in the breach than in the observance," for with a second effort, he spoke :—

" You have not yet read the brochure, I presume ? It is not sufficiently inviting ? "

I replied that I had read it.

He waited, as if wishing me to give an opinion upon it unasked. Unasked, however, I was in no mood to do or say anything. If any concessions were to be made—if any advances were demanded—that was the affair of the very docile pupil of Père Silas, not mine. His eye settled upon me gently; there was mildness at the moment in its blue ray—there was solicitude—a shade of pathos; there were meanings composite and contrasted—reproach melting into remorse. At the moment, probably, he would have been glad to see something emotional in me. I could not show it. In another minute, however, I should have betrayed confusion, had I not bethought myself to take some quill-pens from my desk, and begin soberly to mend them.

I knew that action would give a turn to his mood. He never liked to see me mend pens; my knife was always dull-edged—my hand, too, was unskilful; hacked and chipped. On this occasion I cut my own finger—half on purpose. I wanted to restore him to his natural state, to set him at his ease, to get him to chide.

“Maladroite!” he cried at last, “she will make mincemeat of her hands.”

He put Sylvie down, making her lie quiet beside his bonnet-grec, and, depriving me of the pens and penknife, proceeded to slice, nib, and point with the accuracy and celerity of a machine.

“ Did I like the little book ? ” he now inquired.

Suppressing a yawn, I said I hardly knew.

“ Had it moved me ? ”

“ I thought it had made me a little sleepy.”

(After a pause) “ Allons donc ! It was of no use taking that tone with him. Bad as I was—and he should be sorry to have to name all my faults at a breath—God and nature had given me ‘ trop de sensibilité et de sympathie ’ not to be profoundly affected by an appeal so touching.”

“ Indeed ! ” I responded, rousing myself quickly, “ I was not affected at all—not a whit.”

And in proof, I drew from my pocket a perfectly dry handkerchief, still clean and in its folds.

Hereupon I was made the object of a string of strictures rather piquant than polite. I listened with zest. After those two days of unnatural silence, it was better than music to hear M. Paul haranguing again just in his old fashion. I listened, and meantime solaced myself and Sylvie with the contents of a bonbonnière, which M. Emanuel's gifts kept well



supplied with chocolate comfits. It pleased him to see even a small matter from his hand duly appreciated. He looked at me and the spaniel while we shared the spoil; he put up his penknife. Touching my hand with the bundle of new-cut quills, he said:—

“Dites-donc, petite sœur—speak frankly—what have you thought of me during the last two days?”

But of this question I would take no manner of notice; its purport made my eyes fill. I caressed Sylvie assiduously. M. Paul, leaning over the desk, bent towards us:—

“I called myself your brother,” he said; “I hardly know what I am—brother—friend—I cannot tell. I know I think of you—I feel I wish you well—but I must check myself; you are to be feared. My best friends point out danger, and whisper caution.”

“You do right to listen to your friends. By all means be cautious.”

“It is your religion—your strange, self-reliant, invulnerable creed, whose influence seems to clothe you in, I know not what, unblessed panoply. You are good—Père Silas calls you good, and loves you—but your terrible, proud, earnest Protestantism, there is the danger. It expresses itself by your eye



at times ; and again, it gives you certain tones and certain gestures that make my flesh creep. You are not demonstrative, and yet, just now—when you handled that tract—my God ! I thought Lucifer smiled.”

“Certainly I don’t respect that tract—what then?”

“Not respect that tract? But it is the pure essence of faith, love, charity ! I thought it would touch you : in its gentleness, I trusted that it could not fail. I laid it in your desk with a prayer. I must indeed be a sinner : Heaven will not hear the petitions that come warmest from my heart. You scorn my little offering. Oh, *cela me fait mal !*”

“Monsieur, I don’t scorn it—at least, not as your gift. Monsieur, sit down ; listen to me. I am not a heathen, I am not hard-hearted, I am not unchristian, I am not dangerous, as they tell you ; I would not trouble your faith ; you believe in God and Christ and the Bible, and so do I.”

“But *do* you believe in the Bible? Do you receive Revelation? What limits are there to the wild, careless daring of your country and sect? Père Silas dropped dark hints.”

By dint of persuasion, I made him half-define these hints ; they amounted to crafty Jesuit-slant-

ders. That night M. Paul and I talked seriously and closely. He pleaded, he argued. *I* could not argue—a fortunate incapacity ; it needed but triumphant, logical opposition to effect all the director wished to be effected ; but I could talk in my own way—the way M. Paul was used to—and of which he could follow the meanderings and fill the hiatus, and pardon the strange stammerings, strange to him no longer. At ease with him, I could defend my creed and faith in my own fashion ; in some degree I could lull his prejudices. He was not satisfied when he went away, hardly was he appeased ; but he was made thoroughly to feel that Protestants were not necessarily the irreverent Pagans his director had insinuated ; he was made to comprehend something of their mode of honouring the Light, the Life, the Word ; he was enabled partly to perceive that, while their veneration for things venerable was not quite like that cultivated in his Church, it had its own, perhaps, deeper power—its own more solemn awe.

I found that Perè Silas (himself, I must repeat, not a bad man, though the advocate of a bad cause) had darkly stigmatized Protestants in general, and myself by inference, with strange names, had

ascribed to us strange “isms ;” Monsieur Emanuel revealed all this in his frank fashion, which knew not secretiveness, looking at me as he spoke with a kind, earnest fear, almost trembling lest there should be truth in the charges. Perè Silas, it seems, had closely watched me, had ascertained that I went by turns, and indiscriminately, to the three Protestant Chapels of Villette — the French, German, and English—*id est*, the Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian. Such liberality argued in the Father’s eyes profound indifference—who tolerates all, he reasoned, can be attached to none. Now, it happened that I had often secretly wondered at the minute and unimportant character of the differences between these three sects—at the unity and identity of their vital doctrines: I saw nothing to hinder them from being one day fused into one grand Holy Alliance, and I respected them all, though I thought that in each there were faults of form ; incumbrances, and trivialities. Just what I thought, that did I tell M. Emanuel, and explained to him that my own last appeal, the guide to which I looked, and the teacher which I owned, must always be the Bible itself, rather than any sect, of whatever name or nation.

He left me soothed, yet full of solicitude, breathing a wish, as strong as a prayer, that if I were wrong, Heaven would lead me right. I heard, poured forth on the threshold, some fervid murmurings to "Marie, Reine du Ciel," some deep aspiration that *his* hope might yet be *mine*.

Strange! I had no such feverish wish to turn him from the faith of his fathers. I thought Romanism wrong, a great mixed image of gold and clay; but it seemed to me that *this* Romanist held the purer elements of his creed with an innocency of heart which God must love.

The preceding conversation passed between eight and nine o'clock of the evening, in a school-room of the quiet Rue Fossette, opening on a sequestered garden. Probably about the same, or a somewhat later hour of the succeeding evening, its echoes, collected by holy obedience, were breathed verbatim in an attent ear, at the panel of a confessional, in the hoary church of the Magi. It ensued that Père Silas paid a visit to Madame Beck, and stirred by I know not what mixture of motives, persuaded her to let him undertake for a time the heretic Englishwoman's spiritual direction.

Hereupon I was put through a course of reading—that is, I just glanced at the books lent me ; they were too little in my way to be thoroughly read, marked, learned, or inwardly digested. And besides, I had a book up-stairs, under my pillow, whereof certain chapters satisfied my needs in the article of spiritual lore, furnishing such precept and example as, to my heart's core, I was convinced could not be improved on.

Then Perè Silas showed me the fair side of Rome, her good works, and bade me judge the tree by its fruits.

In answer, I felt and I avowed that these works were *not* the fruits of Rome ; they were but her abundant blossoming, but the fair promise she showed the world. That bloom, when set, savoured not of charity ; the apple full-formed was ignorance, abasement, and bigotry. Out of men's afflictions and affections were forged the rivets of their servitude. Poverty was fed and clothed, and sheltered, to bind it by obligation to “the Church ;” orphanage was reared and educated that it might grow up in the fold of “the Church ;” sickness was tended that it might die after the formula and in the ordinance of “the Church ;” and men were over-



wrought, and women most murderously sacrificed, and all laid down a world God made pleasant for his creatures' good, and took up a cross, monstrous in its galling weight, that they might serve Rome, prove her sanctity, confirm her power, and spread the reign of her tyrant "Church."

For man's good was little done; for God's glory less. A thousand ways were opened with pain, with blood-sweats, with lavishing of life; mountains were cloven through their breasts, and rocks were split to their base; and all for what? That a Priesthood might march straight on and straight upward to an all-dominating eminence, whence they might at last stretch the sceptre of their Moloch "Church."

It will not be. God is not with Rome, and, were human sorrows still for the Son of God, would he not mourn over her cruelties and ambitions, as once he mourned over the crimes and woes of doomed Jerusalem!

Oh, lovers of power! Oh, mitred aspirants for this world's kingdoms! an hour will come, even to you, when it will be well for your hearts—pausing faint at each broken beat—that there is a Mercy beyond human compassions, a Love stronger than this strong death which even you must face, and

before it, fall ; a Charity more potent than any sin, even yours ; a Pity which redeems worlds—nay, absolves Priests.

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My third temptation was held out in the pomp of Rome, the glory of her kingdom. I was taken to the churches on solemn occasions—days of fête and state ; I was shown the Papal ritual and ceremonial. I looked at it.

Many people—men and women—no doubt far my superiors in a thousand ways, have felt this display impressive, have declared that though their Reason protested, their Imagination was subjugated. I cannot say the same. Neither full procession, nor high mass, nor swarming tapers, nor swinging censers, nor ecclesiastical millinery, nor celestial jewellery, touched my imagination a whit. What I saw struck me as tawdry, not grand ; as grossly material, not poetically spiritual.

This I did not tell Père Silas ; he was old, he looked venerable, through every abortive experiment, under every repeated disappointment, he remained personally kind to me, and I felt tender of hurting his feelings. But on the evening of a

certain day when, from the balcony of a great house, I had been made to witness a huge mingled procession of the church and the army — priests with relics, and soldiers with weapons, an obese and aged archbishop, habited in cambric and lace, looking strangely like a gray daw in bird-of-paradise plumage, and a band of young girls fantastically robed and garlanded—*then* I spoke my mind to M. Paul.

“I did not like it,” I told him, “I did not respect such ceremonies; I wished to see no more.”

And having relieved my conscience by this declaration, I was able to go on, and, speaking more currently and clearly than my wont, to show him that I had a mind to keep to my reformed creed; that the more I saw of Popery the closer I clung to Protestantism; doubtless there were errors in every Church, but I now perceived by contrast how severely pure was my own, compared with her whose painted and meretricious face had been unveiled for my admiration. I told him how we kept fewer forms between us and God; retaining, indeed, no more than, perhaps, the nature of mankind in the mass rendered necessary for due observance. I told him I could not look on flowers

and tinsel, on wax-lights and embroidery, at such times and under such circumstances as should be devoted to lifting the secret vision to Him whose home is Infinity, and his being—Eternity. That when I thought of sin and sorrow, of earthly corruption, mortal depravity, weighty temporal woe—I could not care for chanting priests or mumming officials; that when the pains of existence and the terrors of dissolution pressed before me—when the mighty hope and measureless doubt of the future arose in view—*then*, even the scientific strain, or the prayer in a language learned and dead, harassed with hindrance a heart which only longed to cry—

“ God be merciful to me, a sinner ! ”

When I had so spoken, so declared my faith, and so widely severed myself from him I addressed—then, at last, came a tone accordant, an echo responsive, one sweet chord of harmony in two conflicting spirits.

“ Whatever say priests or controversialists,” murmured M. Emanuel, “ God is good, and loves all the sincere. Believe, then, what you can; believe it as you can; one prayer, at least, we have in common; I also cry—‘ O Dieu, sois appaisé envers moi qui suis pécheur ! ’ ”

He leaned on the back of my chair. After some thought he again spoke :

“How seem in the eyes of that God who made all firmaments, from whose nostrils issued whatever of life is here, or in the stars shining yonder—how seem the differences of man? But as Time is not for God, nor Space, so neither is Measure, nor Comparison. We abase ourselves in our littleness, and we do right; yet it may be that the constancy of one heart, the truth and faith of one mind according to the light He has appointed, import as much to Him as the just motion of satellites about their planets, of planets about their suns, of suns around that mighty unseen centre incomprehensible, ir-realizable, with strange mental effort only divined.

“God guide us all! God bless you, Lucy!”



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## SUNSHINE.

It was very well for Paulina to decline further correspondence with Graham till her father had sanctioned the intercourse, but Dr. Bretton could not live within a league of the Hotel Crécy, and not contrive to visit there often. Both lovers meant at first, I believe, to be distant; they kept their intention so far as demonstrative courtship went, but in feeling they soon drew very near.

All that was best in Graham sought Paulina; whatever in him was noble, awoke, and grew in her presence. With his past admiration of Miss Fanshawe, I suppose his intellect had little to do, but his whole intellect, and his highest tastes, came in question now. These, like all his faculties, were active, eager for nutriment, and alive to gratification when it came.

I cannot say that Paulina designedly led him to talk of books, or formally proposed to herself for a moment the task of winning him to reflection, or planned the improvement of his mind, or so much as fancied his mind could in any one respect be improved. She thought him very perfect; it was Graham himself, who, at first by the merest chance, mentioned some book he had been reading, and when in her response, sounded a welcome harmony of sympathies, something pleasant to his soul, he talked on, more and better perhaps than he had ever talked before on such subjects. She listened with delight, and answered with animation. In each successive answer, Graham heard a music waxing finer and finer to his sense; in each he found a suggestive, persuasive, magic accent that opened a scarce known treasure-house within, showed him unsuspected power in his own mind, and what was better, latent goodness in his heart. Each liked the way in which the other talked; the voice, the diction, the expression pleased; each keenly relished the flavour of the other's wit; they met each other's meaning with strange quickness, their thoughts often matched like carefully-chosen pearls. Graham had wealth of mirth by nature; Paulina pos-

sessed no such inherent flow of animal spirits—unstimulated, she inclined to be thoughtful and pensive—but now she seemed merry as a lark; in her lover's genial presence, she glanced like some soft glad light. How beautiful she grew in her happiness, I can hardly express, but I wondered to see her. As to that gentle ice of hers—that reserve on which she had depended; where was it now? Ah! Graham would not long bear it; he brought with him a generous influence that soon thawed the timid, self-imposed restriction.

Now were the old Bretton days talked over; perhaps brokenly at first, with a sort of smiling diffidence, then with opening candour and still growing confidence. Graham had made for himself a better opportunity than that he had wished me to give; he had earned independence of the collateral help that disobliging Lucy had refused; all his reminiscences of “little Polly” found their proper expression in his own pleasant tones, by his own kind and handsome lips; how much better than if suggested by me.

More than once when we were alone, Paulina would tell me how wonderful and curious it was to discover the richness and accuracy of his memory in

this matter. How, while he was looking at her, recollections would seem to be suddenly quickened in his mind. He reminded her that she had once gathered his head in her arms, caressed his leonine graces, and cried out, "Graham, I *do* like you!" He told her how she would set a footstool beside him, and climb by its aid to his knee. At this day he said he could recall the sensation of her little hands smoothing his cheek, or burying themselves in his thick mane. He remembered the touch of her small forefinger, placed half tremblingly, half curiously, in the cleft in his chin, the lisp, the look with which she would name it "a pretty dimple," then seek his eyes and question why they pierced so, telling him he had a "nice, strange face; far nicer, far stranger, than either his mama or Lucy Snowe."

"Child as I was," remarked Paulina, "I wonder how I dared be so venturous. To me he seems now all sacred, his locks are inaccessible, and, Lucy, I feel a sort of fear when I look at his firm, marble chin, at his straight Greek features. Women are called beautiful, Lucy; he is not like a woman, therefore I suppose he is not beautiful, but what is he then? Do other people see him with my eyes? Do *you* admire him?"

“I’ll tell you what I do, Paulina,” was once my answer to her many questions. “*I never see him.* I looked at him twice or thrice about a year ago, before he recognized me, and then I shut my eyes; and if he were to cross their balls twelve times between each day’s sunset and sunrise, except from memory, I should hardly know what shape had gone by.”

“Lucy, what do you mean?” said she, under her breath.

“I mean that I value vision, and dread being struck stone blind.” It was best to answer her strongly at once, and to silence for ever the tender, passionate confidences which left her lips, sweet honey, and sometimes dropped in my ear—molten lead. To me, she commented no more on her lover’s beauty.

Yet speak of him she would; sometimes shyly in quiet, brief phrases; sometimes with a tenderness of cadence, and music of voice exquisite in itself, but which chafed me at times miserably; and then, I know, I gave her stern looks and words; but cloudless happiness had dazzled her native clear sight, and she only thought Lucy—fitful.

“Spartan girl! Proud Lucy!” she would say,



smiling at me. "Graham says you are the most peculiar, capricious little woman he knows; but yet you are excellent; we both think so."

"You both think you know not what," said I. "Have the goodness to make me as little the subject of your mutual talk and thoughts as possible. I have my sort of life apart from yours."

"But ours, Lucy, is a beautiful life, or it will be; and you shall share it."

"I shall share no man's or woman's life in this world, as you understand sharing. I think I have one friend of my own, but am not sure; and till I *am* sure, I live solitary."

"But solitude is sadness."

"Yes; it is sadness. Life, however, has worse than that. Deeper than melancholy, lies heart-break."

"Lucy, I wonder if anybody will ever comprehend you altogether."

There is, in lovers, a certain infatuation or egotism; they will have a witness of their happiness, cost that witness what it may. Paulina had forbidden letters, yet Dr. Bretton wrote; she had resolved against correspondence, yet she answered, were it only to chide. She showed me these

letters; with something of the spoiled child's wilfulness, and of the heiress's imperiousness, she *made* me read them, As I read Graham's, I scarce wondered at her exaction, and understood her pride: they were fine letters—manly and fond—modest and gallant. Hers must have appeared to him beautiful. They had not been written to show her talents; still less, I think, to express her love. On the contrary, it appeared that she had proposed to herself the task of hiding that feeling, and bridling her lover's ardour. But how could such letters serve such a purpose? Graham was become dear as her life; he drew her like a powerful magnet. For her there was influence unspeakable in all he uttered, wrote, thought, or looked. With this unconfessed confession, her letters glowed; it kindled them, from greeting to adieu.

“I wish papa knew; I *do* wish papa knew!” began now to be her anxious murmur. “I wish, and yet I fear. I can hardly keep Graham back from telling him. There is nothing I long for more than to have this affair settled—to speak out candidly; and yet I dread the crisis. I know, I am certain, papa will be angry at the first; I fear he

will dislike me almost ; it will seem to him an untoward business ; it will be a surprise, a shock ; I can hardly foresee its whole effect on him."

The fact was—her father, long calm, was beginning to be a little stirred : long blind on one point, an importunate light was beginning to trespass on his eye.

To *her*, he said nothing ; but when she was not looking at, or perhaps thinking of him, I saw him gaze and meditate on her.

One evening—Paulina was in her dressing-room, writing, I believe, to Graham ; she had left me in the library, reading—M. de Bassompierre came in ; he sat down : I was about to withdraw ; he requested me to remain—gently, yet in a manner which showed he wished compliance. He had taken his seat near the window, at a distance from me ; he opened a desk ; he took from it what looked like a memorandum-book ; of this book he studied a certain entry for several minutes.

"Miss Snowe," said he, laying it down, "do you know my little girl's age?"

"About eighteen, is it not, sir?"

"It seems so. This old pocket-book tells me she was born on the 5th of May, in the year

18—, eighteen years ago. It is strange; I had lost the just reckoning of her age. I thought of her as twelve—fourteen—an indefinite date; but she seemed a child."

"She is about eighteen," I repeated. "She is grown up; she will be no taller."

"My little jewel!" said M. de Bassompierre, in a tone which penetrated like some of his daughter's accents.

He sat very thoughtful.

"Sir, don't grieve," I said; for I knew his feelings, utterly unspoken as they were.

"She is the only pearl I have," he said; "and now others will find out that she is pure and of price; they will covet her."

I made no answer. Graham Bretton had dined with us that day; he had shone both in converse and looks: I know not what pride of bloom embellished his aspect and mellowed his intercourse. Under the stimulus of a high hope, something had unfolded in his whole manner which compelled attention. I think he had purposed on that day to indicate the origin of his endeavours, and the aim of his ambition. M. de Bassompierre had found himself forced, in a manner, to descry

the direction and catch the character of his homage. Slow in remarking, he was logical in reasoning; having once seized the thread, it had guided him through a long labyrinth.

“Where is she?” he asked.

“She is up-stairs.”

“What is she doing?”

“She is writing.”

“She writes, does she? Does she receive letters?”

“None but such as she can show me. And—sir—she—*they* have long wanted to consult you.”

“Pshaw! They don’t think of me — an old father! I am in the way.”

“Ah, M. de Bassompierre—not so—that can’t be! But Paulina must speak for herself; and Dr. Bretton, too, must be his own advocate.”

“It is a little late. Matters are advanced, it seems.”

“Sir, till you approve, nothing is done—only they love each other.”

“Only!” he echoed.

Invested by fate with the part of confidante and mediator, I was obliged to go on:—

“Hundreds of times has Dr. Bretton been on



the point of appealing to you, sir; but, with all his high courage, he fears you mortally."

"He may well—he may well fear me. He has touched the best thing I have. Had he but let her alone, she would have remained a child for years yet. So. Are they engaged?"

"They could not become engaged without your permission."

"It is well for you, Miss Snowe, to talk and think with that propriety which always characterizes you; but this matter is a grief to me; my little girl was all I had; I have no more daughters and no son; Bretton might as well have looked elsewhere; there are scores of rich and pretty women who would not, I daresay, dislike him; he has looks, and conduct, and connection. Would nothing serve him but my Polly?"

"If he had never seen your 'Polly,' others might and would have pleased him—your niece, Miss Fanshawe, for instance."

"Ah! I would have given him Ginevra with all my heart; but Polly!—I can't let him have her. No—I can't. He is not her equal," he affirmed, rather gruffly. "In what particular is he her match? They talk of fortune! I am not an

avaricious or interested man, but the world thinks of these things—and Polly will be rich.”

“Yes, that is known,” said I: “all Villettes knows her as an heiress.”

“Do they talk of my little girl in that light?”

“They do, sir.”

He fell into deep thought. I ventured to say:—

“Would you, sir, think any one Paulina’s match? Would you prefer any other to Dr. Bretton? Do you think higher rank or more wealth would make much difference in your feelings towards a future son-in-law?”

“You touch me there,” said he.

“Look at the aristocracy of Villettes—you would not like them, sir?”

“I should not—never a duc, baron, or vicomte of the lot.”

“I am told many of these persons think about her, sir,” I went on, gaining courage on finding that I met attention rather than repulse. “Other suitors will come, therefore, if Dr. Bretton is refused. Wherever you go, I suppose, aspirants will not be wanting. Independent of heiress-ship, it appears to me that Paulina charms most of those who see her.”

“ Does she? How? My little girl is not thought a beauty.”

“ Sir, Miss De Bassompierre is very beautiful.”

“ Nonsense!—begging your pardon, Miss Snowe, but I think you are too partial. *I* like Polly: I like all her ways and all her looks—but then I am her father; and even *I* never thought about beauty. She is amusing, fairy-like, interesting to me;—you must be mistaken in supposing her handsome?”

“ She attracts, sir: she would attract without the advantages of your wealth and position.”

“ My wealth and position! Are these any bait to Graham? If I thought so——”

“ Dr. Bretton knows these points perfectly, as you may be sure, M. de Bassompierre, and values them as any gentleman would—as *you* would yourself, under the same circumstances—but they are not his baits. He loves your daughter very much; he feels her finest qualities, and they influence him worthily.”

“ What! has my little pet ‘fine qualities?’”

“ Ah, sir! did you observe her that evening when so many men of eminence and learning dined here?”

“ I certainly was rather struck and surprised with

her manner that day; its womanliness made me smile."

"And did you see those accomplished Frenchmen gather round her in the drawing-room?"

"I did; but I thought it was by way of relaxation—as one might amuse one's self with a pretty infant."

"Sir, she demeaned herself with distinction; and I heard the French gentlemen say she was '*pétrie d'esprit et de graces*.' Dr. Bretton thought the same."

"She is a good, dear child, that is certain; and I *do* believe she has some character. When I think of it, I was once ill; Polly nursed me; they thought I should die; she, I recollect, grew at once stronger and tenderer as I grew worse in health. And as I recovered, what a sunbeam she was in my sick-room! Yes; she played about my chair as noiselessly and as cheerful as light. And now she is sought in marriage! I don't want to part with her," said he, and he groaned.

"You have known Dr. and Mrs. Bretton so long," I suggested, "it would be less like separation to give her to him than to another."

He reflected rather gloomily.

“ True. I have long known Louisa Bretton,” he murmured. “ She and I are indeed old, old friends : a sweet, kind girl she was when she was young. You talk of beauty, Miss Snowe ! *she* was handsome, if you will—tall, straight, and blooming—not the mere child or elf my Polly seems to me : at eighteen, Louisa had a carriage and stature fit for a princess. She is a comely and a good woman now. The lad is like her ; I have always thought so, and favoured and wished him well. Now he repays me by this robbery ! My little treasure used to love her old father dearly and truly. It is all over now, doubtless—I am an incumbrance.”

The door opened—his “ little treasure ” came in. She was dressed, so to speak, in evening beauty ; that animation which sometimes comes with the close of day, warmed her eye and cheek ; a tinge of summer crimson heightened her complexion ; her curls fell full and long on her lily neck ; her white dress suited the heat of June. Thinking me alone, she had brought in her hand the letter just written—brought it folded but unsealed. I was to read it. When she saw her father, her tripping step faltered a little, paused a moment—the colour in her cheek flowed rosy over her whole face.



“Polly,” said M. de Bassompierre, in a low voice, with a grave smile, “do you blush at seeing papa? That is something new.”

“I don’t blush—I never *do* blush,” affirmed she, while another eddy from the heart sent up its scarlet. “But I thought you were in the dining-room, and I wanted Lucy.”

“You thought I was with John Graham Bretton, I suppose? But he has just been called out: he will be back soon, Polly. He can post your letter for you; it will save Matthieu a ‘course,’ as he calls it.”

“I don’t post letters,” said she, rather pettishly.

“What do you do with them, then?—come here and tell me.”

Both her mind and gesture seemed to hesitate a second—to say “Shall I come?”—but she approached.

“How long is it since you became a letter-writer, Polly? It only seems yesterday when you were at your pot-hooks, labouring away absolutely with both hands at the pen.”

“Papa, they are not letters to send to the post in your letter-bag; they are only notes, which I give now and then into the person’s hand, just to satisfy.”

"The person! That means Miss Snowe, I suppose?"

"No, papa—not Lucy."

"Who then? Perhaps Mrs. Bretton?"

"No, papa—not Mrs. Bretton."

"Who then, my little daughter? Tell papa the truth."

"Oh, papa!" she cried with earnestness, "I will—I *will* tell you the truth—all the truth; I am glad to tell you—glad, though I tremble."

She *did* tremble: growing excitement, kindling feeling, and also gathering courage, shook her.

"I hate to hide my actions from you, papa. I fear you and love you above everything but God. Read the letter; look at the address."

She laid it on his knee. He took it up and read it through; his hand shaking, his eyes glistening meantime.

He re-folded it, and viewed the writer with a strange, tender, mournful amaze.

"Can *she* write so—the little thing that stood at my knee but yesterday? Can she feel so?"

"Papa, is it wrong? Does it pain you?"

"There is nothing wrong in it, my innocent little Mary; but it pains me."

"But, papa, listen! You shall not be pained by me. I would give up everything—almost" (correcting herself): "I would die rather than make you unhappy; that would be too wicked!"

She shuddered.

"Does the letter not please you? Must it not go? Must it be torn? It shall, for your sake, if you order it."

"I order nothing."

"Order something, papa; express your wish; only don't hurt, don't grieve Graham. I cannot, *cannot* bear that. I love you, papa; but I love Graham too, because—because—it is impossible to help it."

"This splendid Graham is a young scamp, Polly—that is my present notion of him: it will surprise you to hear that, for my part, I do not love him one whit. Ah! years ago I saw something in that lad's eye I never quite fathomed—something his mother had not—a depth which warned a man not to wade into that stream too far; now, suddenly, I find myself taken over the crown of the head."

"Papa, you don't—you have not fallen in; you are safe on the bank; you can do as you please; your power is despotic; you can shut me up in a

convent, and break Graham's heart to-morrow, if you choose to be so cruel. Now autocrat, now czar, will you do this?"

"Off with him to Siberia, red whiskers and all; I say, I don't like him, Polly, and I wonder that you should."

"Papa," said she, "do you know you are very naughty? I never saw you look so disagreeable, so unjust, so almost vindictive before. There is an expression in your face which does not belong to you."

"Off with him!" pursued Mr. Home, who certainly did look sorely crossed and annoyed—even a little bitter; "but, I suppose, if he went, Polly would pack a bundle and run after him; her heart is fairly won—won, and weaned from her old father."

"Papa, I say it is naughty, it is decidedly wrong, to talk in that way. I am *not* weaned from you, and no human being and no mortal influence *can* wean me."

"Be married, Polly! Espouse the red whiskers. Cease to be a daughter; go and be a wife!"

"Red whiskers! I wonder what you mean, papa. You should take care of prejudice. You

sometimes say to me that all the Scotch, your countrymen, are the victims of prejudice. It is proved now, I think, when no distinction is to be made between red and deep nut-brown."

"Leave the prejudiced old Scotchman; go away."

She stood looking at him a minute. She wanted to show firmness, superiority to taunts; knowing her father's character, guessing his few foibles, she had expected the sort of scene which was now transpiring; it did not take her by surprise, and she desired to let it pass with dignity, reliant upon reaction. Her dignity stood her in no stead. Suddenly her soul melted in her eyes; she fell on his neck:—

"I won't leave you, papa; I'll never leave you. I won't pain you; I'll never pain you!" was her cry.

"My lamb! my treasure!" murmured the loving though rugged sire. He said no more for the moment; indeed, those two words were hoarse.

The room was now darkening. I heard a movement, a step without. Thinking it might be a servant coming with candles, I gently opened, to prevent intrusion. In the ante-room stood no servant; a tall gentleman was placing his hat on the



table, drawing off his gloves slowly—lingering, waiting, it seemed to me. He called me neither by sign nor word; yet his eye said:—

“Lucy, come here.” And I went.

Over his face a smile flowed, while he looked down on me: no temper, save his own, would have expressed by a smile the sort of agitation which now fevered him.

“Mr. de Bassompierre is there—is he not?” he inquired, pointing to the library.

“Yes.”

“He noticed me at dinner? He understood me?”

“Yes, Graham.”

“I am brought up for judgment, then, and so is *she*?”

“Mr. Home” (we now and always continued to term him Mr. Home at times) “is talking to his daughter.”

“Ha! These are sharp moments, Lucy!”

He was quite stirred up; his young hand trembled; a vital (I was going to write *mortal*, but such words ill apply to one all living like him)—a vital suspense now held, now hurried, his breath: in all this trouble his smile never faded.

“Is he *very* angry, Lucy?”

"*She* is very faithful, Graham."

"What will be done unto me?"

"Graham, your star must be fortunate."

"Must it? Kind prophet! So cheered, I should be a faint heart indeed to quail. I think I find all women faithful, Lucy. I ought to love them, and I do. My mother is good; *she* is divine; and *you* are true as steel. Are you not?"

"Yes, Graham."

"Then give me thy hand, my little god-sister; it is a friendly little hand to me, and always has been: And now for the great venture. God be with the right! Lucy, say, Amen!"

He turned, and waited till I said "Amen!"—which I did to please him: the old charm, in doing as he bid me, came back. I wished him success; and successful I knew he would be. He was born victor, as some are born vanquished.

"Follow me!" he said; and I followed him into Mr. Home's presence.

"Sir," he asked, "what is my sentence?"

The father looked at him; the daughter kept her face hid.

"Well, Bretton," said Mr. Home, "you have given me the usual reward of hospitality. I enter-

tained you ; you have taken my best. I was always glad to see you ; you were glad to see the one precious thing I had. You spoke me fair ; and, meantime, I will not say you *robbed* me, but I am bereaved, and what I have lost, *you*, it seems, have won."

"Sir, I cannot repent."

"Repent ! Not you ! You triumph, no doubt : John Graham, you descended partly from a Highlander and a chief, and there is a trace of the Celt in all you look, speak, and think. You have his cunning and his charm. The red——(Well, then, Polly, the *fair*) hair, the tongue of guile, and brain of wile, are all come down by inheritance."

"Sir, I *feel* honest enough," said Graham ; and a genuine English blush covered its face with its warm witness of sincerity. "And yet," he added, "I won't deny that in some respects you accuse me justly. In your presence I have always had a thought which I dared not show you. I did truly regard you as the possessor of the most valuable thing the world owns for me. I wished for it ; I tried for it. Sir, I ask for it now."

"John, you ask much."

"Very much, sir. It must come from your gene-

rosity, as a gift; from your justice, as a reward. I can never earn it."

"Ay! Listen to the Highland tongue!" said Mr. Home. "Look up, Polly! Answer this, 'braw wooer;' send him away!"

She looked up. She shyly glanced at her eager, handsome suitor. She gazed tenderly on her furrowed sire.

"Papa, I love you both," said she; "I can take care of you both. I need not send Graham away—he can live here; he will be no inconvenience," she alleged with that simplicity of phraseology which at times was wont to make both her father and Graham smile. They smiled now.

"He will be a prodigious inconvenience to me," still persisted Mr. Home. "I don't want him, Polly; he is too tall; he is in my way. Tell him to march."

"You will get used to him, papa. He seemed exceedingly tall to me at first—like a tower when I looked up at him; but, on the whole, I would rather not have him otherwise."

"I object to him altogether, Polly; I can do without a son-in-law. I should never have requested the best man in the land to stand

to me in that relation. Dismiss this gentleman."

"But he has known you so long, papa, and suits you so well."

"Suits *me*, forsooth! Yes; he has pretended to make my opinions and tastes his own. He has humoured me for good reasons. I think, Polly, you and I will bid him good bye."

"Till to-morrow only. Shake hands with Graham, papa."

"No: I think not: I am not friends with him. Don't think to coax me between you."

"Indeed, indeed, you *are* friends. Graham, stretch out your right hand. Papa, put out yours. Now, let them touch. Papa, don't be stiff; close your fingers; be pliant—there! But that is not a clasp—it is a grasp! Papa, you grasp like a vice. You crush Graham's hand to the bone; you hurt him!"

He must have hurt him; for he wore a massive ring, set round with brilliants, of which the sharp facets cut into Graham's flesh and drew blood: but pain only made Dr. John laugh, as anxiety had made him smile.

"Come with me into my study," at last, said



Mr. Home to the doctor. They went. Their interview was not long, but I suppose it was conclusive. The suitor had to undergo an interrogatory and a scrutiny on many things. Whether Dr. Bretton was at times guileful in look and language or not, there was a sound foundation below. His answers, I understood afterwards, evinced both wisdom and integrity. He had managed his affairs well. He had struggled through entanglements; his fortunes were in the way of retrieval; he proved himself in a position to marry.

Once more the father and lover appeared in the library. M. de Bassompierre shut the door; he pointed to his daughter.

"Take her," he said. "Take her, John Bretton; and may God deal with you as you deal with her!"

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Not long after, perhaps a fortnight, I saw three persons, Count de Bassompierre, his daughter, and Dr. Graham Bretton, sitting on one seat, under a low-spreading and umbrageous tree, in the grounds of the palace at Bois l'Etang. They had come

thither to enjoy a summer evening : outside the magnificent gates their carriage waited to take them home ; the green sweeps of turf spread round them quiet and dim ; the palace rose at a distance, white as a crag on Pentelicus ; the evening star shone above it ; a forest of flowering shrubs embalmed the climate of this spot ; the hour was still and sweet ; the scene, but for this group, was solitary.

Paulina sat between the two gentlemen ; while they conversed, her little hands were busy at some work ; I thought at first she was binding a nosegay. No ; with the tiny pair of scissors, glittering in her lap, she had severed spoils from each manly head beside her, and was now occupied in plaiting together the gray lock and the golden wave. The plait woven—no silk-thread being at hand to bind it—a tress of her own hair was made to serve that purpose ; she tied it like a knot, prisoned it in a locket, and laid it on her heart.

“ Now,” said she, “ there is an amulet made, which has virtue to keep you two always friends. You can never quarrel so long as I wear this.”

An amulet was indeed made, a spell framed which rendered enmity impossible. She was become

a bond to both, an influence over each, a mutual concord. From them she drew her happiness, and what she borrowed, she, with interest, gave back.

Is there, indeed, such happiness on earth? I asked, as I watched the father, the daughter, the future husband, now united—all blessed and blessing.

Yes; it is so. Without any colouring of romance, or any exaggeration of fancy, it is so. Some real lives do—for some certain days or years—actually anticipate the happiness of Heaven; and, I believe, if such perfect happiness is once felt by good people (to the wicked it never comes), its sweet effect is never wholly lost. Whatever trials follow, whatever pains of sickness or shades of death, the glory precedent still shines through, cheering the keen anguish, and tinging the deep cloud.

I will go farther. I *do* believe there are some human beings so born, so reared, so guided from a soft cradle to a calm and late grave, that no excessive suffering penetrates their lot, and no tempestuous blackness overcasts their journey. And often, these are not pampered, selfish beings, but Nature's elect, harmonic and benign; men and

women mild with charity, kind agents of God's kind attributes.

Let me not delay the happy truth. Graham Bretton and Paulina de Bassompierre were married, and such an agent did Dr. Bretton prove. He did not with time degenerate; his faults decayed, his virtues ripened; he rose in intellectual refinement, he won in moral profit: all dregs filtered away, the clear wine settled bright and tranquil. Bright, too, was the destiny of his sweet wife. She kept her husband's love, she aided in his progress—of his happiness she was the corner stone.

This pair was blessed indeed, for years brought them, with great prosperity, great goodness; they imparted with open hand, yet wisely. Doubtless they knew crosses, disappointments, difficulties; but these were well borne. More than once, too, they had to look on Him whose face flesh scarce can see and live: they had to pay their tribute to the King of Terrors. In the fulness of years, M. de Bassompierre was taken; in ripe old age departed Louisa Bretton. Once even there rose a cry in their halls, of Rachel weeping for her children; but others sprang healthy and blooming to replace the lost: Dr. Bretton saw himself live again in a

son who inherited his looks and his disposition; he had stately daughters, too, like himself; these children he reared with a suave, yet a firm hand; they grew up according to inheritance and nurture.

In short, I do but speak the truth when I say that these two lives of Graham and Paulina were blessed, like that of Jacob's favoured son, with "blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under." It was so, for God saw that it was good.



## CHAPTER XL.

## CLOUD.

BUT it is not so for all. What then? His will be done, as done it surely will be, whether we humble ourselves to resignation or not. The impulse of creation forwards it; the strength of powers, seen and unseen, has its fulfilment in charge. Proof of a life to come must be given. In fire and in blood, if needful, must that proof be written. In fire and in blood do we trace the record throughout nature. In fire and in blood does it cross our own experience. Sufferer, faint not through terror of this burning evidence. Tired wayfarer, gird up thy loins, look upward, march onward. Pilgrims and brother mourners, join in friendly company. Dark through the wilderness of this world stretches the way for most of us: equal and steady be our tread; be our cross our

banner. For staff we have His promise, whose "word is tried, whose way perfect:" for present hope His providence, "who gives the shield of salvation, whose gentleness makes great;" for final home His bosom, who "dwells in the height of Heaven;" for crowning prize a glory, exceeding and eternal. Let us so run that we may obtain; let us endure hardness as good soldiers; let us finish our course, and keep the faith, reliant in the issue to come off more than conquerors: "Art thou not from everlasting mine Holy One? WE SHALL NOT DIE!"

On a Thursday morning we were all assembled in classe, waiting for the lesson of literature. The hour was come; we expected the master.

The pupils of the first classe sat very still; the cleanly-written compositions prepared since the last lesson lay ready before them, neatly tied with ribbon, waiting to be gathered by the hand of the professor as he made his rapid round of the desks. The month was July, the morning fine, the glass-door stood ajar, through it played a fresh breeze, and plants, growing at the lintel, waved, bent, looked in, seeming to whisper tidings.

M. Emanuel was not always quite punctual; we

scarcely wondered at his being a little late, but we wondered when the door at last opened and, instead of him with his swiftness and his fire, there came quietly upon us, the cautious Madame Beck.

She approached M. Paul's desk ; she stood before it ; she drew round her the light shawl covering her shoulders ; beginning to speak in low, yet firm tones, and with a fixed gaze, she said —

“This morning there will be no lesson of literature.”

The second paragraph of her address followed, after about two minutes' pause.

“It is probable the lessons will be suspended for a week. I shall require at least that space of time to find an efficient substitute for M. Emanuel. Meanwhile, it shall be our study to fill the blanks usefully.

“Your professor, ladies,” she went on, “intends, if possible, duly to take leave of you. At the present moment he has not leisure for that ceremony. He is preparing for a long voyage. A very sudden and urgent summons of duty calls him to a great distance. He has decided to leave Europe for an indefinite time. Perhaps he may tell you more himself. Ladies, instead of the usual lesson

with M. Emanuel, you will, this morning, read English with Mademoiselle Lucy."

She bent her head courteously, drew closer the folds of her shawl, and passed from the classe.

A great silence fell: then a murmur went round the room: I believe some pupils wept.

Some time elapsed. The noise, the whispering, the occasional sobbing increased. I became conscious of a relaxation of discipline, a sort of growing disorder, as if my girls felt that vigilance was withdrawn, and that surveillance had virtually left the classe. Habit and the sense of duty enabled me to rally quickly, to rise in my usual way, to speak in my usual tone, to enjoin, and finally to establish quiet. I made the English reading long and close. I kept them at it the whole morning. I remember feeling a sentiment of impatience towards the pupils who sobbed. Indeed, their emotion was not of much value; it was only an hysteric agitation. I told them so unsparingly. I half ridiculed them. I was severe. The truth was, I could not do with their tears, or that gasping sound; I could not bear it. A rather weak-minded, low-spirited pupil kept it up when the others had done; relentless necessity obliged and assisted me so to accost her, that she

dared not carry on the demonstration, that she was forced to conquer the convulsion.

That girl would have had a right to hate me, except that, when school was over and her companions departing, I ordered her to stay, and when they were gone, I did what I had never done to one among them before—pressed her to my heart and kissed her cheek. But, this impulse yielded to, I speedily put her out of the classe, for, upon that poignant strain, she wept more bitterly than ever.

I filled with occupation every minute of that day, and should have liked to sit up all night if I might have kept a candle burning; the night, however, proved a bad time, and left bad effects, preparing me ill for the next day's ordeal of insufferable gossip. Of course this news fell under general discussion. Some little reserve had accompanied the first surprise: that soon wore off; every mouth opened; every tongue wagged; teachers, pupils, the very servants, mouthed the name of "Emanuel." He, whose connection with the school was contemporary with its commencement, thus suddenly to withdraw! All felt it strange.

They talked so much, so long, so often, that, out



of the very multitude of their words and rumours, grew at last some intelligence. About the third day I heard it said that he was to sail in a week; then—that he was bound for the West Indies. I looked at Madame Beck's face, and into her eyes, for disproof or confirmation of this report; I perused her all over for information, but no part of her disclosed more than what was unperturbed and commonplace.

“This secession was an immense loss to her,” she alleged. “She did not know how she should fill up the vacancy. She was so used to her kinsman, he had become her right hand; what should she do without him? She had opposed the step, but M. Paul had convinced her it was his duty.”

She said all this in public, in classe, at the dinner-table, speaking audibly to Zélie St. Pierre.

“Why was it his duty?” I could have asked her that. I had impulses to take hold of her suddenly, as she calmly passed me in classe, to stretch out my hand and grasp her fast, and say, “Stop. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. *Why* is it his duty to go into banishment?” But Madame always addressed some other teacher,

and never looked at me, never seemed conscious I could have a care in the question.

The week wore on. Nothing more was said about M. Emanuel coming to bid us good-bye; none seemed anxious for his coming; none questioned whether or not he would come; none betrayed torment lest he should depart silent and unseen; incessantly did they talk, and never, in all their talk, touched on this vital point. As to Madame, she of course could see him, and say to him as much as she pleased. What should *she* care whether or not he appeared in the school-room?

The week consumed. We were told that he was going on such a day, that his destination was "Basseterre in Guadaloupe:" the business which called him abroad related to a friend's interests, not his own: I thought as much.

"Basseterre in Guadaloupe." I had little sleep about this time, but whenever I *did* slumber, it followed infallibly that I was quickly roused with a start, while the words "Basseterre," "Guadaloupe," seemed pronounced over my pillow, or ran athwart the darkness around and before me, in zig-zag characters of red or violet light.

For what I felt there was no help, and how could

I help feeling? M. Emanuel had been very kind to me of late days; he had been growing hourly better and kinder. It was now a month since we had settled the theological difference, and in all that time there had been no quarrel. Nor had our peace been the cold daughter of divorce; we had not lived aloof; he had come oftener, he had talked with me more than before; he had spent hours with me, with temper soothed, with eye content, with manner home-like and mild. Kind subjects of conversation had grown between us; he had inquired into my plans of life, and I had communicated them; the school-project pleased him; he made me repeat it more than once, though he called it an Alnaschar dream. The jar was over; the mutual understanding was settling and fixing; feelings of union and hope made themselves profoundly felt in the heart; affection and deep esteem and dawning trust had each fastened its bond.

What quiet lessons I had about this time! No more taunts on my "intellect," no more menaces of grating public shows! How sweetly, for the jealous gibe, and the more jealous, half-passionate eulogy, were substituted a mute, indulgent help, a fond guidance, and a tender forbearance which forgave

but never praised. There were times when he would sit for many minutes and not speak at all; and when dusk or duty brought separation, he would leave with words like these: “*Il est doux, le repos! Il est précieux, le calme bonheur!*”

One evening, not ten short days since, he joined me whilst walking in my alley. He took my hand. I looked up in his face; I thought he meant to arrest my attention.

“*Bonne petite amie!*” said he, softly; “*douce consolatrice!*” But through his touch, and with his words, a new feeling and a strange thought found a course. Could it be that he was becoming more than friend or brother? Did his look speak a kindness beyond fraternity or amity?

His eloquent look had more to say, his hand drew me forward, his interpreting lips stirred. No. Not now. Here into the twilight alley broke an interruption: it came dual and ominous: we faced two bodeful forms—a woman’s and a priest’s—Madame Beck and Père Silas.

The aspect of the latter I shall never forget. On the first impulse, it expressed a Jean-Jacques sensibility, stirred by the signs of affection just surprised; then, immediately, darkened over it the jaundice of

ecclesiastical jealousy. He spoke to *me* with unction. He looked on his pupil with sternness. As to Madame Beck, she, of course, saw nothing—nothing; though her kinsman retained in her presence the hand of the heretic foreigner, not suffering withdrawal, but clasping it close and fast.

Following these incidents, that sudden announcement of departure had struck me at first as incredible. Indeed, it was only frequent repetition, and the credence of the hundred and fifty minds round me, which forced on me its full acceptance. As to that week of suspense, with its blank yet burning days, which brought from him no word of explanation—I remember, but I cannot describe its passage.

The last day broke. Now would he visit us. Now he would come and speak his farewell, or he would vanish mute, and be seen by us nevermore.

This alternative seemed to be present in the mind of not a living creature in that school. All rose at the usual hour; all breakfasted as usual; all, without reference to, or apparent thought of their late professor, betook themselves with wonted phlegm to their ordinary duties.

So oblivious was the house, so tame, so trained its



proceedings, so inexpectant its aspect—I scarce knew how to breathe in an atmosphere thus stagnant, thus smothering. Would no one lend me a voice? Had no one a wish, no one a word, no one a prayer to which I could say—Amen?

I had seen them unanimous in demand for the merest trifle—a treat, a holiday, a lesson's remission; they could not, they *would* not now band to besiege Madame Beck, and insist on a last interview with a Master who had certainly been loved, at least by some—loved as *they* could love—but, oh! what is the love of the multitude?

I knew where he lived: I knew where he was to be heard of, or communicated with; the distance was scarce a stone's-throw; had it been in the next room—unsummoned, I could make no use of my knowledge. To follow, to seek out, to remind, to recall—for these things I had no faculty.

M. Emanuel might have passed within reach of my arm: had he passed silent and unnoticed, silent and stirless, should I have suffered him to go by.

Morning wasted. Afternoon came, and I thought all was over. My heart trembled in its place. My blood was troubled in its current. I was quite sick,

and hardly knew how to keep at my post or do my work. Yet the little world round me plodded on indifferent; all seemed jocund, free of care, or fear, or thought: the very pupils who, seven days since, had wept hysterically at a startling piece of news, appeared quite to have forgotten the news, its import, and their emotion.

A little before five o'clock, the hour of dismissal, Madame Beck sent for me to her chamber, to read over and translate some English letter she had received, and to write for her the answer. Before settling to this work, I observed that she softly closed the two doors of her chamber; she even shut and fastened the casement, though it was a hot day, and free circulation of air was usually regarded by her as indispensable. Why this precaution? A keen suspicion, an almost fierce distrust, suggested such question. Did she want to exclude sound? what sound?

I listened as I had never listened before; I listened like the evening and winter-wolf, snuffing the snow, scenting prey, and hearing far off the traveller's tramp. Yet I could both listen and write. About the middle of the letter I heard—what checked my pen—a tread in the vestibule. No

door-bell had rung ; Rosine—acting doubtless by orders—had anticipated such *réveillée*. Madame saw me halt. She coughed, made a bustle, spoke louder. The tread had passed on to the classes.

“ Proceed,” said Madame ; but my hand was fettered, my ear enchained, my thoughts were carried off captive.

The classes formed another building ; the hall parted them from the dwelling-house : despite distance and partition, I heard the sudden stir of numbers, a whole division rising at once.

“ They are putting away work,” said Madame.

It was indeed the hour to put away work, but why that sudden hush—that instant quell of the tumult ?

“ Wait, madame—I will see what it is.”

And I put down my pen and left her. Left her ? No : she would not be left : powerless to detain me, she rose and followed, close as my shadow. I turned on the last step of the stair :—

“ Are you coming too ? ” I asked.

“ Yes,” said she ; meeting my glance with a peculiar aspect—a look, clouded, yet resolute. We proceeded then, not together, but she walked in my steps.

He was come. Entering the first classe, I saw him. There, once more appeared the form most familiar. I doubt not they had tried to keep him away, but he was come.

The girls stood in a semi-circle ; he was passing round, giving his farewells, pressing each hand, touching with his lips each cheek. This last ceremony, foreign custom permitted at such a parting—so solemn, to last so long.

I felt it hard that Madame Beck should dog me thus ; following and watching me close ; my neck and shoulder shrunk in fever under her breath ; I became terribly goaded.

He was approaching ; the semi-circle was almost travelled round ; he came to the last pupil ; he turned. But Madame was before me ; she had stepped out suddenly ; she seemed to magnify her proportions and amplify her drapery ; she eclipsed me ; I was hid. She knew my weakness and deficiency ; she could calculate the degree of moral paralysis—the total default of self-assertion—with which, in a crisis, I could be struck. She hastened to her kinsman, she broke upon him volubly, she mastered his attention, she hurried him to the door—the glass-door opening on the garden. I think

he looked round ; could I but have caught his eye, courage, I think, would have rushed in to aid feeling, and there would have been a charge, and, perhaps a rescue ; but already the room was all confusion, the semi-circle broken into groups, my figure was lost among thirty more conspicuous. Madame had her will ; yes, she got him away, and he had not seen me ; he thought me absent. Five o'clock struck, the loud dismissal bell rung, the school separated, the room emptied.

There seems, to my memory, an entire darkness and distraction in some certain minutes I then passed alone—a grief inexpressible over a loss unendurable. *What* should I do ; oh ! *what* should I do ; when all my life's hope was thus torn by the roots out of my riven, outraged heart ?

What I *should* have done, I know not, when a little child—the least child in the school—broke with its simplicity and its unconsciousness into the raging yet silent centre of that inward conflict.

“Mademoiselle,” lisped the treble voice, “I am to give you that. M. Paul said I was to seek you all over the house, from the grenier to the cellar, and when I found you, to give you that.”

And the child delivered a note ; the little dove



dropped on my knee, its olive-leaf plucked off. I found neither address nor name, only these words:—

“It was not my intention to take leave of you when I said good-bye to the rest, but I hoped to see you in classe. I was disappointed. The interview is deferred. Be ready for me. Ere I sail, I must see you at leisure, and speak with you at length. Be ready; my moments are numbered, and, just now, monopolized; besides I have a private business on hand which I will not share with any, nor communicate—even to you.—PAUL.”

“Be ready?” Then it must be this evening; was he not to go on the morrow? Yes; of that point I was certain. I had seen the date of his vessel’s departure advertised. Oh! *I* would be ready, but could that longed-for meeting really be achieved? the time was so short, the schemers seemed so watchful, so active, so hostile; the way of access appeared strait as a gully, deep as a chasm—Apolylon straddled across it, breathing flames. Could my Greatheart overcome? Could my guide reach me?

Who might tell? Yet I began to take some courage, some comfort; it seemed to me that I felt

a pulse of his heart beating yet true to the whole throb of mine.

I waited my champion. Apollyon came trailing his Hell behind him. I think if Eternity held torment, its form would not be fiery rack, nor its nature, despair. I think that on a certain day amongst those days which never dawned, and will not set, an angel entered Hades—stood, shone, smiled, delivered a prophecy of conditional pardon, kindled a doubtful hope of bliss to come, not now, but at a day and hour unlooked for, revealed in his own glory and grandeur the height and compass of his promise; spoke thus—then towering, became a star, and vanished into his own Heaven. His legacy was suspense—a worse boon than despair.

All that evening I waited, trusting in the dove-sent olive-leaf, yet in the midst of my trust, terribly fearing. My fear pressed heavy. Cold and peculiar, I knew it for the partner of a rarely-belied presentiment. The first hours seemed long and slow; in spirit I clung to the flying skirts of the last. They passed like drift cloud—like the rack scudding before a storm.

They passed. All the long, hot summer day burned away like a Yule-log; the crimson of its

close perished; I was left bent among the cool blue shades, over the pale and ashen gleams of its night.

Prayers were over; it was bed-time; my co-in-mates were all retired. I still remained in the gloomy first-classe, forgetting, or at least disregarding, rules I had never forgotten or disregarded before.

How long I paced that classe I cannot tell; I must have been afoot many hours; mechanically had I moved aside benches and desks, and had made for myself a path down its length. There I walked, and there, when certain that the whole household were abed, and quite out of hearing—there, I at last wept. Reliant on Night, confiding in Solitude, I kept my tears sealed, my sobs chained, no longer; they heaved my heart; they tore their way. In this house, what grief could be sacred?

Soon after eleven o'clock—a very late hour for the Rue Fossette—the door unclosed, quietly but not stealthily; a lamp's flame invaded the moonlight; Madame Beck entered, with the same composed air, as if coming on an ordinary occasion, at an ordinary season. Instead of at once addressing me, she went to her desk, took her keys, and

seemed to seek something ; she loitered over this feigned search long, too long. She was calm, too calm ; my mood scarce endured the pretence ; driven beyond common range, two hours since I had left behind me wonted respects and fears. Led by a touch, and ruled by a word, under usual circumstances, no yoke could now be borne—no curb obeyed.

“It is more than time for retirement,” said Madame ; “the rule of the house has already been transgressed too long.”

Madame met no answer : I did not check my walk ; when she came in my way, I put her out of it.

“Let me persuade you to calm, meess ; let me lead you to your chamber,” said she, trying to speak softly.

“No !” I said ; “neither you nor another shall persuade or lead me.”

“Your bed shall be warmed. Goton is sitting up still. She shall make you comfortable : she shall give you a sedative.”

“Madame,” I broke out, “you are a sensualist. Under all your serenity, your peace, and your decorum, you are an undenied sensualist. Make your

own bed warm and soft; take sedatives and meats, and drinks spiced and sweet, as much as you will. If you have any sorrow or disappointment—and, perhaps, you have—nay, I *know* you have—seek your own palliatives, in your own chosen resources. Leave me, however. *Leave me*, I say!”

“I must send another to watch you, meess; I must send Goton.”

“I forbid it. Let me alone. Keep your hand off me, and my life, and my troubles. Oh, Madame! in *your* hand there is both chill and poison. You envenom and you paralyze.”

“What have I done, meess? You must not marry Paul. He cannot marry.”

“Dog in the manger!” I said; for I knew she secretly wanted him, and had always wanted him. She called him “insupportable;” she railed at him for a “dévot;” she did not love, but she wanted to marry, that she might bind him to her interest. Deep into some of Madame’s secrets I had entered—I know not how; by an intuition or an inspiration which came to me—I know not whence. In the course of living with her, too, I had slowly learned, that, unless with an inferior, she must ever be a rival. She was *my* rival, heart and soul, though secretly,



under the smoothest bearing, and utterly unknown to all save her and myself.

Two minutes I stood over Madame, feeling that the whole woman was in my power, because in some moods, such as the present—in some stimulated states of perception, like that of this instant—her habitual disguise, her mask and her domino, were to me a mere network reticulated with holes; and I saw underneath a being heartless, self-indulgent, and ignoble. She quietly retreated from me; meek and self-possessed, though very uneasy, she said, “If I would not be persuaded to take rest, she must reluctantly leave me.” Which she did incontinent, perhaps even more glad to get away, than I was to see her vanish.

This was the sole flash-eliciting, truth-extorting, rencontre which ever occurred between me and Madame Beck; this short night-scene was never repeated. It did not one whit change her manner to me. I do not know that she revenged it. I do not know that she hated me the worse for my fell candour. I think she bucklered herself with the secret philosophy of her strong mind, and resolved to forget what it irked her to remember. I know that to the end of our mutual lives there occurred

no repetition of, no allusion to, that fiery passage.

That night passed : all nights—even the starless night before dissolution—must wear away. About six o'clock, the hour which called up the household, I went out to the court, and washed my face in its cold, fresh, well-water. Entering by the carré, a piece of mirror-glass, set in an oaken cabinet, repeated my image. It said I was changed; my cheeks and lips were sodden-white, my eyes were glassy, and my eye-lids swollen and purple.

On rejoining my companions, I knew they all looked at me—my heart seemed discovered to them; I believed myself self-betrayed. Hideously certain did it seem that the very youngest of the school must guess why and for whom I despaired.

“Isabelle,” the child whom I had once nursed in sickness, approached me. Would she, too, mock me?

“Que vous êtes pâle ! Vous êtes donc bien malade, mademoiselle !” said she, putting her finger in her mouth, and staring with a wistful stupidity which at the moment seemed to me more beautiful than the keenest intelligence.

Isabelle did not long stand alone in the recom-

mentation of ignorance ; before the day was over, I gathered cause of gratitude towards the whole blind household. The multitude have something else to do than to read hearts and interpret dark sayings. Who wills, may keep his own counsel—be his own secret's sovereign. In the course of that day, proof met me on proof, not only that the cause of my present sorrow was unguessed, but that my whole inner life for the last six months, was still mine only. It was not known—it had not been noted—that I held in peculiar value one life among all lives. Gossip had passed me by ; curiosity had looked me over : both subtle influences, hovering always round, had never become centred upon me. A given organization may live in a full fever-hospital, and escape typhus. M. Emanuel had come and gone ; I had been taught and sought ; in season and out of season he had called me, and I had obeyed him : “ M. Paul wants Miss Lucy ”—“ Miss Lucy is with M. Paul ”—such had been the perpetual bulletin ; and nobody commented, far less condemned. Nobody hinted, nobody jested. Madame Beck read the riddle ; none else resolved it. What I now suffered was called illness—a headache : I accepted the baptism.

But what bodily illness was ever like this pain? This certainty that he was gone without a farewell—this cruel conviction that fate and pursuing furies—a woman's envy and a priest's bigotry—would suffer me to see him no more? What wonder that the second evening found me like the first—untamed, tortured, again pacing a solitary room in an unalterable passion of silent desolation?

Madame Beck did not herself summon me to bed that night—she did not come near me; she sent Ginevra Fanshawe—a more efficient agent for the purpose she could not have employed. Ginevra's first words—"Is your headache very bad to-night?" (for Ginevra, like the rest, thought I had a headache—an intolerable headache which made me frightfully white in the face, and insanely restless in the foot)—her first words, I say, inspired the impulse to flee anywhere, so that it were only out of reach. And soon, what followed—plaints about her own headaches—completed the business.

I went up-stairs. Presently I was in my bed—my miserable bed—haunted with quick scorpions. I had not been laid down five minutes, when another emissary arrived: Goton came, bringing

me something to drink. I was consumed with thirst—I drank eagerly; the beverage was sweet, but I tasted a drug.

“Madame says it will make you sleep chouchou,” said Goton, as she received back the emptied cup.

Ah! the sedative had been administered. In fact, they had given me a strong opiate. I was to be held quiet for one night.

The household came to bed, the night-light was lit, the dormitory hushed. Sleep soon reigned: over those pillows, sleep won an easy supremacy; contented sovereign over heads and hearts which did not ache—he passed by the unquiet.

The drug wrought. I know not whether Madame had over-charged or under-charged the dose; its result was not that she intended. Instead of stupor, came excitement. I became alive to new thought—to reverie peculiar in colouring. A gathering call ran among the faculties, their bugles sang, their trumpets rang an untimely summons. Imagination was roused from her rest, and she came forth impetuous and venturous. With scorn she looked on Matter, her mate—

“Rise!” she said. “Sluggard! this night



I will have *my* will ; nor shalt thou prevail."

" Look forth and view the night !" was her cry ; and when I lifted the heavy blind from the casement close at hand—with her own royal gesture, she showed me a moon supreme, in an element deep and splendid.

To my gasping senses she made the glimmering gloom, the narrow limits, the oppressive heat of the dormitory, intolerable. She lured me to leave this den and follow her forth into dew, coolness, and glory.

She brought upon me a strange vision of Villette at midnight. Especially she showed the park, the summer-park, with its long alleys all silent, lone and safe ; among these lay a huge stone-basin—that basin I knew, and beside which I had often stood—deep-set in the tree-shadows, brimming with cool water, clear, with a green, leafy, rushy bed. What of all this ? The park-gates were shut up, locked, sentinelled ; the place could not be entered.

Could it not ? A point worth considering ; and while revolving it, I mechanically dressed. Utterly incapable of sleeping or lying still—excited from head to foot—what could I do better than dress ?

The gates were locked, soldiers set before them ; was there, then, no admission to the park ?

The other day, in walking past, I had seen, without then attending to the circumstance, a gap in the paling—one stake broken down : I now saw this gap again in recollection—saw it very plainly—the narrow, irregular aperture visible between the stems of the lindens, planted orderly as a colonade. A man could not have made his way through that aperture, nor could a stout woman, perhaps not Madame Beck ; but I thought I might : I fancied I should like to try, and once within, at this hour the whole park would be mine—the moonlight, midnight park !

How soundly the dormitory slept ! What deep slumbers ! What quiet breathing ! How very still the whole large house ! What was the time ? I felt restless to know. There stood a clock in the classe below ; what hindered me from venturing down to consult it ? By such a moon, its large white face and jet black figures must be vividly distinct.

As for hindrance to this step, there offered not so much as a creaking hinge or a clicking latch. On these hot July nights, close air could not be tole-

rated, and the chamber-door stood wide open. Will the dormitory-planks sustain my tread untraitorous? Yes. I know wherever a board is loose, and will avoid it. The oak staircase creaks somewhat as I descend, but not much:—I am in the carré.

The great classe-doors are close shut; they are bolted. On the other hand, the entrance to the corridor stands open. The classes seem to my thought, great dreary jails, buried far back beyond thoroughfares, and for me, filled with spectral and intolerable memories, laid miserable amongst their straw and their manacles. The corridor offers a cheerful vista, leading to the high vestibule which opens direct upon the street.

Hush!—the clock strikes. Ghostly deep as is the stillness of this convent, it is only eleven. While my ear follows to silence the hum of the last stroke, I catch faintly from the built-out capital, a sound like bells or like a band—a sound where sweetness, where victory, where mourning blend. Oh, to approach this music nearer, to listen to it alone by the rushy basin! Let me go—oh, let me go! What hinders, what does not aid freedom?

There, in the corridor, hangs my garden-costume, my large hat, my shawl. There is no lock on the

huge, heavy, porte-cochère ; there is no key to seek ; it fastens with a sort of spring-bolt, not to be opened from the outside, but which, from within, may be noiselessly withdrawn. Can I manage it ? It yields to my hand, yields with propitious facility. I wonder as that portal seems almost spontaneously to uncloset ; I wonder as I cross the threshold and step on the paved street, wonder at the strange ease with which this prison has been forced. It seems as if I had been pioneered invisibly, as if some dissolving force had gone before me ; for myself, I have scarce made an effort.

Quiet Rue Fossette ! I find on this pavement that wanderer-wooing summer night of which I mused ; I see its moon over me ; I feel its dew in the air. But here I cannot stay ; I am still too near old haunts ; so close under the dungeon, I can hear the prisoners moan. This solemn peace is not what I seek, it is not what I can bear ; to me the face of that sky bears the aspect of a world's death. The park also will be calm—I know, a mortal serenity prevails everywhere—yet let me seek the park.

I took a route well-known, and went up towards the palatial and royal Haute-Ville ; thence the

music I had heard, certainly floated ; it was hushed now, but it might re-waken. I went on ; neither band nor bell-music came to meet me ; another sound replaced it, a sound like a strong tide, a great flow, deepening as I proceeded. Light broke, movement gathered, chimes pealed—to what was I coming ? Entering on the level of a Grande Place, I found myself, with the suddenness of magic, plunged amidst a gay, living, joyous crowd.

Villette is one blaze, one broad illumination ; the whole world seems abroad ; moonlight and heaven are banished : the town, by her own flambeaux, beholds her own splendour—gay dresses, grand equipages, fine horses and gallant riders throng the bright streets. I see even scores of masks. It is a strange scene, stranger than dreams. But where is the park ?—I ought to be near it. In the midst of this glare the park must be shadowy and calm—*there*, at least, are neither torches, lamps, nor crowd ?

I was asking this question, when an open carriage passed me filled with known faces. Through the deep throng it could pass but slowly ; the spirited horses fretted in their curbed ardour. I saw the occupants of that carriage well ; me they could not



see, or, at least, not know, folded close in my large shawl, screened with my straw hat (in that motley crowd no dress was noticeably strange). I saw the Count de Bassompierre; I saw my godmother, handsomely apparelled, comely and cheerful; I saw, too, Paulina Mary, compassed with the triple halo of her beauty, her youth, and her happiness. In looking on her countenance of joy, and eyes of festal light, one scarce remembered to note the gala elegance of what she wore; I know only that the drapery floating about her was all white and light and bridal: seated opposite to her I saw Graham Bretton; it was in looking up at him her aspect had caught its lustre—the light repeated in *her* eyes beamed first out of his.

It gave me strange pleasure to follow these friends viewlessly, and I *did* follow them, as I thought, to the park. I watched them alight (carriages were inadmissible) amidst new and unanticipated splendours. Lo! the iron gateway, between the stone columns, was spanned by a flaming arch built of massed stars; and, following them cautiously beneath that arch, where were they, and where was I?

In a land of enchantment, a garden most gor-

geous, a plain sprinkled with coloured meteors, a forest with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the foliage; a region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth—of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphynx; incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Villette.

No matter that in five minutes the secret was mine—the key of the mystery picked up, and its illusion unveiled—no matter that I quickly recognized the material of these solemn fragments—the timber, the paint, and the pasteboard—these inevitable discoveries failed to quite destroy the charm, or undermine the marvel of that night. No matter that I now seized the explanation of the whole great fête—a fête of which the conventual Rue Fossette had not tasted, though it had opened at dawn that morning, and was still in full vigour near midnight.

In past days there had been, said history, an awful crisis in the fate of Labassecour, involving I know not what peril to the rights and liberties of her gallant citizens. Rumours of wars, there had been, if not wars themselves; a kind of struggling in the

streets—a bustle—a running to and fro, some rearing of barricades, some burgher-rioting, some calling out of troops, much interchange of brick-bats, and even a little of shot. Tradition held that patriots had fallen: in the old Basse-Ville was shown an enclosure, solemnly built in and set apart, holding, it was said, the sacred bones of martyrs. Be this as it may, a certain day in the year was still kept as a festival in honour of the said patriots and martyrs of somewhat apocryphal memory—the morning being given to a solemn *Te Deum* in St. Jean Baptiste, the evening devoted to spectacles, decorations, and illuminations, such as these I now saw.

While looking up at the image of a white ibis, fixed on a column—while fathoming the deep, torch-lit perspective of an avenue, at the close of which was couched a sphynx—I lost sight of the party which, from the middle of the great square, I had followed—or, rather, they vanished like a group of apparitions. On this whole scene was impressed a dream-like character; every shape was wavering, every movement floating, every voice echo-like—half-mocking, half-uncertain. Paulina and her friends being gone, I scarce could avouch that I had really seen them; nor did I miss them as guides

through the chaos, far less regret them as protectors amidst the night.

That festal night would have been safe for a very child. Half the peasantry had come in from the outlying environs of Villette, and the decent burghers were all abroad and around, dressed in their best. My straw-hat passed amidst cap and jacket, short petticoat, and long calico mantle, without, perhaps, attracting a glance; I only took the precaution to bind down the broad leaf gipsy-wise, with a supplementary ribbon; and then I felt safe as if masked.

Safe I passed down the avenues—safe I mixed with the crowd where it was deepest. To be still was not in my power, nor quietly to observe. I took a revel of the scene; I drank the elastic night-air—the swell of sound, the dubious light, now flashing, now fading. As to Happiness or Hope, they and I had shaken hands, but just now—I scorned Despair.

My vague aim, as I went, was to find the stone-basin, with its clear depth and green lining: of that coolness and verdure I thought, with the passionate thirst of unconscious fever. Amidst the glare, and hurry, and throng, and noise, I still secretly and chiefly longed to come on that circular

mirror of crystal, and surprise the moon glassing therein her pearly front.

I knew my route, yet it seemed as if I was hindered from pursuing it direct : now a sight, and now a sound, called me aside, luring me down this alley and down that. Already I saw the thick-planted trees which framed this tremulous and rippled glass, when, choiring out of a glade to the right, broke such a sound as I thought might be heard if Heaven were to open—such a sound, perhaps, as *was* heard above the plain of Bethlehem, on the night of glad tidings.

The song, the sweet music, rose afar, but rushing swiftly on fast-strengthening pinions—there swept through these shades so full a storm of harmonies that, had no tree been near against which to lean, I think I must have dropped. Voices were there, it seemed to me, unnumbered ; instruments varied and countless—bugle, horn, and trumpet I knew. The effect was as a sea breaking into song with all its waves.

The swaying tide swept this way, and then it fell back, and I followed its retreat. It led me towards a Byzantine building—a sort of kiosk near the park's centre. Round about stood crowded thousands,



gathered to a grand concert in the open air. What I had heard was, I think, a wild Jager chorus; the night, the space, the scene, and my own mood, had but enhanced the sounds and their impression.

Here were assembled ladies, looking by this light most beautiful; some of their dresses were gauzy, and some had the sheen of satin; the flowers and the blond trembled, and the veils waved about their decorated bonnets, as that host-like chorus, with its greatly-gathering sound, sundered the air above them. Most of these ladies occupied the little light park-chairs, and behind and beside them stood guardian gentlemen. The outer ranks of the crowd were made up of citizens, plebeians and police.

In this outer rank I took my place. I rather liked to find myself the silent, unknown, consequently unaccosted neighbour of the short petticoat and the sabot; and only the distant gazer at the silk robe, the velvet mantle, and the plumed cha-peau. Amidst so much life and joy, too, it suited me to be alone—quite alone. Having neither wish nor power to force my way through a mass so close-packed, my station was on the farthest confines, where, indeed, I might hear, but could see little.

“Mademoiselle is not well placed,” said a voice

at my elbow. Who dared accost *me*, a being in a mood so little social? I turned, rather to repel than to reply. I saw a man—a burgher—an entire stranger, as I deemed him for one moment, but the next, recognized in him a certain tradesman—a bookseller, whose shop furnished the Rue Fossette with its books and stationery; a man notorious in our pensionnat for the excessive brittleness of his temper, and frequent snappishness of his manner, even to us, his principal customers; but whom, for my solitary self, I had ever been disposed to like, and had always found civil, sometimes kind; once, in aiding me about some troublesome little exchange of foreign money, he had done me a service. He was an intelligent man; under his asperity, he was a good-hearted man; the thought had sometimes crossed me, that a part of his nature bore affinity to a part of M. Emanuel's, (whom he knew well, and whom I had often seen sitting on Miret's counter, turning over the current month's publications); and it was in this affinity I read the explanation of that conciliatory feeling with which I instinctively regarded him.

Strange to say, this man knew me under my straw-hat and closely-folded shawl; and, though I

deprecated the effort, he insisted on making a way for me through the crowd, and finding me a better situation. He carried his disinterested civility further, and, from some quarter, procured me a chair. Once and again, I have found that the most cross-grained are by no means the worst of mankind ; nor the humblest in station, the least polished in feeling. This man, in his courtesy, seemed to find nothing strange in my being here alone ; only a reason for extending to me, as far as he could, a retiring, yet efficient attention. Having secured me a place and a seat, he withdrew without asking a question, without obtruding a remark, without adding a superfluous word. No wonder that Professor Emanuel liked to take his cigar and his lounge, and to read his *feuilleton* in M. Miret's shop ; the two must have suited.

I had not been seated five minutes, ere I became aware that chance and my worthy burgher friend had brought me once more within view of a familiar and domestic group. Right before me sat the Brettons and De Bassompierres. Within reach of my hand—had I chosen to extend it—sat a figure like a fairy-queen, whose array, lilies and their leaves seemed to have suggested ; whatever was

not spotless white, being forest-green. My god-mother, too, sat so near, that, had I leaned forward, my breath might have stirred the ribbon of her bonnet. They were too near; having been just recognized by a comparative stranger, I felt uneasy at this close vicinage of intimate acquaintance.

It made me quite start when Mrs. Bretton, turning to Mr. Home, and speaking out of a kind impulse of memory, said,—

“I wonder what my steady little Lucy would say to all this if she were here? I wish we had brought her, she would have enjoyed it much.”

“So she would, so she would, in her grave sensible fashion; it is a pity but we had asked her,” rejoined the kind gentleman; and added, “I like to see her so quietly pleased; so little moved, yet so content.”

Dear were they both to me, dear are they to this day in their remembered benevolence. Little knew they the rack of pain which had driven Lucy almost into fever, and brought her out, guideless and reckless, urged and drugged to the brink of frenzy. I had half a mind to bend over the elders’ shoulders, and answer their goodness with the thanks of my eyes. M. de Bassompierre did not well know *me*,

but I knew *him*, and honoured and admired his nature, with all its plain sincerity, its warm affection, and unconscious enthusiasm. Possibly I might have spoken, but just then Graham turned, he turned with one of his stately firm movements, so different from those of a sharp-tempered undersized man; there was behind him a throng, a hundred ranks deep; there were thousands to meet his eye and divide its scrutiny—why then did he concentrate all on me—oppressing me with the whole force of that full, blue, steadfast orb? Why, if he *would* look, did not one glance satisfy him? why did he turn on his chair, rest his elbow on its back, and study me leisurely? He could not see my face, I held it down; surely, he *could* not recognize me; I stooped, I turned, I *would* not be known. He rose, by some means he contrived to approach, in two minutes he would have had my secret; my identity would have been grasped between his, never tyrannous, but always powerful hands. There was but one way to evade or to check him. I implied, by a sort of supplicatory gesture, that it was my prayer to be let alone; after that, had he persisted, he would perhaps have seen the spectacle of Lucy incensed: not all that was grand, or good, or kind



in him (and Lucy felt the full amount) should have kept her quite tame, or absolutely inoffensive and shadowlike. He looked, but he desisted. He shook his handsome head, but he was mute. He resumed his seat, nor did he again turn or disturb me by a glance, except indeed for one single instant, when a look, rather solicitous than curious, stole my way—speaking what somehow stilled my heart like “the south-wind quieting the earth.” Graham’s thoughts of me were not entirely those of a frozen indifference, after all. I believe in that goodly mansion, his heart, he kept one little place under the skylights where Lucy might have entertainment, if she chose to call. It was not so handsome as the chambers where he lodged his male friends; it was not like the hall where he accommodated his philanthropy, or the library where he treasured his science, still less did it resemble the pavilion where his marriage feast was splendidly spread; yet, gradually, by long and equal kindness, he proved to me that he kept one little closet, over the door of which was written “Lucy’s Room.” I kept a place for him, too—a place of which I never took the measure, either by rule or compass: I think it was like the tent of Peri-Banou. All my

life long I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand—yet, released from that hold and constriction, I know not but its innate capacity for expanse might have magnified it into a tabernacle for a host.

Forbearing as he was to-night, I could not stay in this proximity; this dangerous place and seat must be given up; I watched my opportunity, rose, and stole away. He might think, he might even believe that Lucy was contained within that shawl, and sheltered under that hat; he could never be certain, for he did not see my face.

Surely the spirit of restlessness was by this time appeased? Had I not had enough of adventure? Did I not begin to flag, quail, and wish for safety under a roof? Not so. I still loathed my bed in the school-dormitory more than words can express; I clung to whatever could distract thought. Somehow I felt, too, that the night's drama was but begun, that the prologue was scarce spoken: throughout this woody and turfy theatre reigned a shadow of mystery; actors and incidents unlooked-for, waited behind the scenes: I thought so: foreboding told me as much.

Straying at random, obeying the push of every chance elbow, I was brought to a quarter where

trees planted in clusters, or towering singly, broke up somewhat the dense packing of the crowd, and gave it a more scattered character. These confines were far from the music, and somewhat aloof even from the lamps, but there was sound enough to soothe, and with that full, high moon, lamps were scarce needed. Here had chiefly settled family-groups, burgher-parents ; some of them, late as was the hour, actually surrounded by their children, with whom it had not been thought advisable to venture into the closer throng.

Three fine tall trees growing close, almost twined stem within stem, lifted a thick canopy of shade above a green knoll, crowned with a seat—a seat which might have held several, yet it seemed abandoned to one, the remaining members of the fortunate party in possession of this site standing dutifully round ; yet, amongst this reverent circle was a lady, holding by the hand a little girl.

When I caught sight of this little girl, she was twisting herself round on her heel, swinging from her conductress's hand, flinging herself from side to side with wanton and fantastic gyrations. These perverse movements arrested my attention, they struck me as of a character fearfully familiar. On

clos inspection, no less so appeared the child's equipment; the lilac silk pelisse, the small swans-down boa, the white bonnet—the whole holiday toilette, in short, was the gala garb of a cherub but too-well known, of that tadpole, Désirée Beck—and Désirée Beck it was—she, or an imp in her likeness.

I might have taken this discovery as a thunder-clap, but such hyperbole would have been premature; discovery was destined to rise more than one degree, ere it reached its climax.

On whose hand could the amiable Désirée swing thus selfishly, whose glove could she tear thus recklessly, whose arm thus strain with impunity, or on the borders of whose dress thus turn and trample insolently, if not the hand, glove, arm, and robe of her lady-mother? And there, in an Indian shawl and a pale-green crape bonnet—there, fresh, portly, blithe, and pleasant—there stood Madame Beck.

Curious! I had certainly deemed Madame in her bed, and Désirée in her crib, at this blessed minute, sleeping, both of them, the sleep of the just, within the sacred walls, amidst the profound seclusion of the Rue Fossette. Most certainly also they did not picture “Meess Lucie” otherwise engaged;

and here we all three were taking our "ébats" in the fête-blazing park at midnight!

The fact was, Madame was only acting according to her quite justifiable wont. I remembered now I had heard it said among the teachers—though without at the time particularly noticing the gossip—that often, when we thought Madame in her chamber, sleeping, she was gone, full-dressed, to take her pleasure at operas, or plays, or balls. Madame had no sort of taste for a monastic life, and took care—largely, though discreetly—to season her existence with a relish of the world.

Half a dozen gentlemen of her friends stood about her. Amongst these, I was not slow to recognize two or three. There was her brother, M. Victor Kint; there was another person, moustached and with long hair—a calm, taciturn man, but whose traits bore a stamp and a semblance I could not mark unmoved. Amidst reserve and phlegm, amidst contrasts of character and of countenance, something there still was which recalled a face—mobile, fervent, feeling—a face changeable, now clouded, and now alight—a face from my world taken away, for my eyes lost, but where my best spring-hours of life had alternated in shadow and



in glow—that face, where I had often seen movements, so near the signs of genius—that why there did not shine fully out, the undoubted fire, the thing, the spirit, and the secret itself—I could never tell. Yes—this Josef Emanuel—this man of peace—reminded me of his ardent brother.

Besides Messieurs Victor and Josef, I knew another of this party. This third person stood behind and in the shade, his attitude too was stooping, yet his dress and bald white head made him the most conspicuous figure of the group. He was an ecclesiastic: he was Père Silas. Do not fancy, reader, that there was any inconsistency in the priest's presence at this fête. This was not considered a show of Vanity Fair, but a commemoration of patriotic sacrifice. The Church patronized it, even with ostentation. There were troops of priests in the park that night.

Père Silas stooped over the seat with its single occupant, the rustic bench and that which sat upon it: a strange mass it was—bearing no shape, yet magnificent. You saw, indeed, the outline of a face and features, but these were so cadaverous and so strangely placed, you could almost have fancied a head severed from its trunk, and flung at random

on a pile of rich merchandize. The distant lamp-rays glanced on clear pendants, on broad rings; neither the chasteness of moonlight, nor the distance of the torches, could quite subdue the gorgeous dyes of the drapery. Hail, Madame Walravens! I think you looked more witch-like than ever. And presently the good lady proved that she was indeed no corpse or ghost, but a harsh and hardy old woman; for, upon some aggravation in the clamorous petition of Désirée Beck to her mother, to go to the kiosk and take sweetmeats, the hunchback suddenly fetched her a resounding rap with her gold-knobbed cane.

There, then, were Madame Walravens, Madame Beck, Père Silas—the whole conjuration, the secret junta. The sight of them thus assembled did me good. I cannot say that I felt weak before them, or abashed, or dismayed. They outnumbered me, and I was worsted and under their feet; but, as yet, I was not dead.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## OLD AND NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

FASCINATED as by a basilisk with three heads, I could not leave this clique ; the ground near them seemed to hold my feet. The canopy of entwined trees held out shadow, the night whispered a pledge of protection, and an officious lamp flashed just one beam to show me an obscure, safe seat, and then vanished. Let me now briefly tell the reader all that, during the past dark fortnight, I have been silently gathering from Rumour, respecting the origin and the object of M. Emanuel's departure. The tale is short, and not new : its alpha is Mammon, and its omega, Interest.

If Madame Walravens was hideous as a Hindoo idol, she seemed also to possess, in the estimation of these her votaries, an idol's consequence. The fact was, she had been rich—very rich ; and though for

the present, without the command of money, she was likely one day to be rich again. At Basseterre, in Guadaloupe, she possessed a large estate, received in dowry on her marriage sixty years ago, sequestered since her husband's failure; but now, it was supposed, cleared of claim, and, if duly looked after by a competent agent of integrity, considered capable of being made, in a few years, largely productive.

Père Silas took an interest in this prospective improvement for the sake of religion and the church, whereof Magloire Walravens was a devout daughter. Madame Beck, distantly related to the hunchback, and knowing her to be without family of her own, had long brooded over contingencies with a mother's calculating forethought, and, harshly treated as she was by Madame Walravens, never ceased to court her for interest's sake. Madame Beck and the priest were thus, for money reasons, equally and sincerely interested in the nursing of the West-Indian estate.

But the distance was great, and the climate hazardous. The competent and upright agent wanted, must be a devoted man. Just such a man had Madame Walravens retained for twenty years

in her service, blighting his life, and then living on him, like an old fungus ; such a man had Père Silas trained, taught, and bound to him by the ties of gratitude, habit, and belief. Such a man Madame Beck knew, and could in some measure influence. "My pupil," said Père Silas, "if he remains in Europe, runs risk of apostacy, for he has become entangled with a heretic." Madame Beck made also her private comment, and preferred in her own breast her secret reason for desiring expatriation. The thing she could not obtain, she desired not another to win ; rather would she destroy it. As to Madame Walravens, she wanted her money and her land, and knew Paul, if he liked, could make the best and faithfullest steward : so the three self-seekers banded and beset the one unselfish. They reasoned, they appealed, they implored ; on his mercy they cast themselves, into his hands they confidingly thrust their interests. They asked but two or three years of devotion—after that, he should live for himself : one of the number, perhaps, wished that in the mean time he might die.

No living being ever humbly laid his advantage at M. Emanuel's feet, or confidingly put it into his hands, that he spurned the trust, or repulsed the



repository. What might be his private pain or inward reluctance to leave Europe—what his calculations for his own future—none asked, or knew, or reported. All this was a blank to me. His conferences with his confessor I might guess; the part duty and religion were made to play in the persuasions used, I might conjecture. He was gone, and had made no sign. There my knowledge closed.

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With my head bent, and my forehead resting on my hands, I sat amidst grouped tree-stems and branching brushwood. Whatever talk passed amongst my neighbours, I might hear, if I would; I was near enough; but, for some time, there was scarce motive to attend. They gossiped about the dresses, the music, the illuminations, the fine night. I listened to hear them say, "It is calm weather for *his* voyage; the 'Antigua'" (his ship) "will sail prosperously." No such remark fell: neither the "Antigua," nor her course, nor her passenger, were named.

Perhaps the light chat scarcely interested old Madame Walravens more than it did me; she appeared

restless, turning her head now to this side, now that, looking through the trees, and among the crowd, as if expectant of an arrival and impatient of a delay. “Où sont-ils ? Pourquoi ne viennent-ils ?” I heard her mutter more than once ; and at last, as if determined to have an answer to her question—which hitherto none seemed to mind, she spoke aloud this phrase—a phrase brief enough, simple enough, but it sent a shock through me—

“Messieurs et mesdames,” said she, “où donc est Justine Marie ?”

“Justine Marie !” What name was this ? Justine Marie—the dead nun—where was she ? Why in her grave, Madame Walravens—what can you want with her ? You shall go to her, but she shall not come to you.

Thus *I* should have answered, had the response lain with me, but nobody seemed to be of my mind ; nobody seemed surprised, startled, or at a loss. The quietest common-place answer met the strange, the dead-disturbing, the Witch-of-Endor query of the hunchback.”

“Justine Marie,” said one, “is coming ; she is in the kiosk ; she will be here presently.”

Out of this question and reply sprang a change

in the chat—chat it still remained—easy, desultory, familiar gossip. Hint, allusion, comment, went round the circle, but all so broken, so dependent on references to persons not named, or circumstances not defined, that, listen intently as I would—and I *did* listen *now* with a fated interest—I could make out no more than that some scheme was on foot, in which this ghostly Justine Marie—dead or alive—was concerned. This family-junta seemed grasping at her somehow, for some reason; there seemed question of a marriage, of a fortune, for whom I could not quite make out—perhaps for Victor Kint, perhaps for Josef Emanuel—both were bachelors. Once I thought the hints and jests rained upon a young fair-haired foreigner of the party, whom they called Heinrich Mühler. Amidst all the badinage, Madame Walravens still obtruded, from time to time, hoarse, cross-grained speeches; her impatience being diverted only by an implacable surveillance of Désirée, who could not stir, but the old woman menaced her with her staff.

“Là voilà!” suddenly cried one of the gentlemen, “voilà Justine Marie qui arrive!”

This moment was for me peculiar. I called up to memory the pictured nun on the panel; present

to my mind was the sad love-story; I saw in thought the vision of the garret, the apparition of the alley, the strange birth of the berceau: I underwent a presentiment of discovery, a strong conviction of coming disclosure. Ah! when imagination once runs riot where do we stop? What winter tree so bare and branchless—what way-side, hedge-munching animal so humble, that Fancy, a passing cloud, and a struggling moonbeam, will not clothe it in spirituality, and make of it a phantom?

With solemn force pressed on my heart, the expectation of mystery breaking up: hitherto I had seen this spectre only through a glass darkly; now was I to behold it face to face. I leaned forward: I looked.

“She comes!” cried Josef Emanuel.

The circle moved as if opening to admit a new and welcome member. At this instant a torch chanced to be carried past; its blaze aided the pale moon in doing justice to the crisis, in lighting to perfection the *dénouement* pressing on. Surely those near me must have felt some little of the anxiety I felt, in degree so unmeted. Of that group, the coolest must have “held his breath for a time!” As for me, my life stood still.

It is over. The moment and the nun are come. The crisis and the revelation are passed by.

The flambeau glares still within a yard, held up in a park-keeper's hand; its long eager tongue of flame almost licks the figure of the Expected—there—where she stands full in my sight. What is she like? What does she wear? How does she look? Who is she?

There are many masks in the Park to-night, and as the hour wears late, so strange a feeling of revelry and mystery begins to spread abroad, that scarce would you discredit me, reader, were I to say that she is like the nun of the attic, that she wears black skirts and white head-clothes, that she looks the resurrection of the flesh, and that she is a risen ghost.

All falsities—all figments! We will not deal in this gear. Let us be honest, and cut, as heretofore, from the homely web of truth.

*Homely*, though, is an ill-chosen word. What I see is not precisely homely. A girl of Villette stands there—a girl fresh from her pensionnat. She is very comely, with the beauty indigenous to this country; she looks well-nourished, fair, and fat of flesh. Her cheeks are round, her eyes good; her hair is abundant.



She is handsomely dressed. She is not alone ; her escort consists of three persons—two being elderly ; these she addresses as “ Mon Oncle ” and “ Ma Tante. ” She laughs, she chats : good-humoured, buxom, and blooming, she looks, at all points, the *bourgeoise belle*.

So much for “ Justine Marie ; ” so much for ghosts and mystery : not that this last was solved—this girl certainly is not my nun ; what I saw in the garret and garden must have been taller by a span.

We have looked at the city belle ; we have cursorily glanced at the respectable old uncle and aunt. Have we a stray glance to give to the third member of this company ? Can we spare him a moment’s notice ? We ought to distinguish him so far, reader ; he has claims on us ; we do not now meet him for the first time. I clasped my hands very hard, and I drew my breath very deep ; I held in the cry, I devoured the ejaculation, I forbade the start, I spoke and I stirred no more than a stone ; but I knew what I looked on ; through the dimness left in my eyes by many nights’ weeping, I knew him. They said he was to sail by the “ Antigua. ” Madame Beck said so. She lied, or she had uttered

what was once truth, and failed to contradict it, when it became false. The "Antigua" was gone, and there stood Paul Emanuel.

Was I glad? A huge load left me. Was it a fact to warrant joy? I know not. Ask first what were the circumstances attendant on this respite? How far did this delay concern *me*? Were there not those whom it might touch more nearly?

After all, who may this young girl, this Justine Marie be? Not a stranger, reader; she is known to me by sight; she visits at the Rue Fossette; she is often of Madame Beck's Sunday parties. She is a relation of both the Becks and Walravens; she derives her baptismal name from the sainted nun who would have been her aunt had she lived; her patronymic is Sauveur; she is an heiress and an orphan, and M. Emanuel is her guardian; some say her godfather. The family junta wish this heiress to be married to one of their band—which is it? Vital question—which is it?

I felt very glad now, that the drug administered in the sweet draught had filled me with a possession which made bed and chamber intolerable. I always, through my whole life, liked to penetrate to the real truth; I like seeking the goddess in her temple,

and handling the veil, and daring the dread glance. O Titaness amongst deities ! The covered outline of thine aspect sickens often through its uncertainty, but define to us one trait, show us one lineament, clear in awful sincerity ; we may gasp in untold terror, but with that gasp we drink in a breath of thy divinity ; our heart shakes, and its currents sway like rivers lifted by earthquake, but we have swallowed strength. To see and know the worst is to take from Fear her main advantage.

The Walravens' party, augmented in numbers, now became very gay. The gentlemen fetched refreshments from the kiosk, all sat down on the turf under the trees ; they drank healths and sentiments ; they laughed, they jested. M. Emanuel underwent some raillery, half good-humoured, half, I thought, malicious, especially on Madame Beck's part. I soon gathered that his voyage had been temporarily deferred of his own will, without the concurrence, even against the advice of his friends ; he had let the "Antigua" go, and had taken his berth in the "Paul et Virginie," appointed to sail a fortnight later. It was his reason for this resolve which they teased him to assign, and which he would only vaguely indicate as "the settlement of a little piece

of business which he had set his heart upon." What *was* this business? Nobody knew. Yes, there was one who seemed partly, at least, in his confidence; a meaning look passed between him and Justine Marie. "La petite va m'aider—n'est ce pas?" said he. The answer was prompt enough, God knows!

"Mais oui, je vous aiderai de tout mon cœur. Vous ferez de moi tout ce que vous voudrez, mon parrain."

And this dear "parrain" took her hand and lifted it to his grateful lips. Upon which demonstration, I saw the light-complexioned young Teuton, Heinrich Mühler, grow restless, as if he did not like it. He even grumbled a few words, whereat M. Emanuel actually laughed in his face, and with the ruthless triumph of the assured conqueror, he drew his ward nearer to him.

M. Emanuel was indeed very joyous that night. He seemed not one whit subdued by the change of scene and action impending. He was the true life of the party; a little despotic perhaps, determined to be chief in mirth, as well as in labour, yet from moment to moment proving indisputably his right of leadership. His was the wittiest word, the

pleasantest anecdote, the frankest laugh. Restlessly active, after his manner, he multiplied himself to wait on all ; but oh ! I saw which was his favourite. I saw at whose feet he lay on the turf, I saw whom he folded carefully from the night air, whom he tended, watched, and cherished as the apple of his eye.

Still, hint and raillery flew thick, and still I gathered that while M. Paul should be absent, working for others, these others, not quite ungrateful, would guard for him the treasure he left in Europe. Let him bring them an Indian fortune ; they would give him in return a young bride and a rich inheritance. As for the saintly consecration, the vow of constancy, that was forgotten : the blooming and charming Present prevailed over the Past ; and at length his nun was indeed buried.

Thus it must be. The revelation was indeed come. Presentiment had not been mistaken in her impulse ; there is a kind of presentiment which never is mistaken ; it was I who had for a moment miscalculated ; not seeing the true bearing of the oracle, I had thought she muttered of vision when, in truth, her prediction touched reality.

I might have paused longer upon what I



saw; I might have deliberated ere I drew inferences. Some perhaps would have held the premises doubtful, the proofs insufficient; some slow sceptics would have incredulously examined, ere they conclusively accepted the project of a marriage between a poor and unselfish man of forty, and his wealthy ward of eighteen; but far from me such shifts and palliatives, far from me such temporary evasion of the actual, such coward fleeing from the dread, the swift-footed, the all-overtaking Fact, such feeble suspense of submission to her the sole sovereign, such paltering and faltering resistance to the Power whose errand is to march conquering and to conquer, such traitor defection from the TRUTH.

No. I hastened to accept the whole plan. I extended my grasp and took it all in. I gathered it to me with a sort of rage of haste, and folded it round me, as the soldier struck on the field folds his colours about his breast. I invoked Conviction to nail upon me the certainty, abhorred while embraced, to fix it with the strongest spikes her strongest strokes could drive; and when the iron had entered well my soul, I stood up, as I thought renovated.

In my infatuation, I said, "Truth, you are a good mistress to your faithful servants! While a Lie pressed **me**, how I suffered! Even when the Falsehood was still sweet, still flattering to the fancy, and warm to the feelings, it wasted me with hourly torment. The persuasion that affection was won could not be divorced from the dread that, by another turn of the wheel, it might be lost. Truth stripped away Falsehood, and Flattery, and Expectancy, and here I stand—free!"

Nothing remained now but to take my freedom to my chamber, to carry it with me to my bed and see what I could make of it. The play was not yet indeed quite played out, I might have waited and watched longer that love scene under the trees, that sylvan courtship. Had there been nothing of love in the demonstration, my Fancy in this hour was so generous, so creative, she could have modelled for it the most salient lineaments, and given it the deepest life and highest colour of passion. But I *would* not look; I had fixed my resolve, but I would not violate my nature. And then—something tore me so cruelly under my shawl, something so dug into my side, a vulture so strong in beak and talon, I must be alone to grapple with it. I think I

never felt jealousy till now. This was not like enduring the endearments of Dr. John and Paulina, against which while I sealed my eyes and my ears, while I withdrew thence my thoughts, my sense of harmony still acknowledged in it a charm. This was an outrage. The love, born of beauty was not mine; I had nothing in common with it: I could not dare to meddle with it, but another love, venturing diffidently into life after long acquaintance, furnace-tried by pain, stamped by constancy, consolidated by affection's pure and durable alloy, submitted by intellect to intellect's own tests, and finally wrought up, by his own process, to his own unflawed completeness, this Love that laughed at Passion, his fast frenzies and his hot and hurried extinction, in *this* Love I had a vested interest; and whatever tended either to its culture or its destruction, I could not view impassibly.

I turned from the group of trees and the "merrie companie" in its shade. Midnight was long past; the concert was over, the crowds were thinning. I followed the ebb. Leaving the radiant park and well-lit Haute-Ville (still well-lit, for this it seems was to be a "nuit blanche" in Villette), I sought the dim lower quarter.

Dim I should not say, for the beauty of moonlight—forgotten in the park—here once more flowed in upon perception. [High she rode, and calm and stainlessly she shone. The music and the mirth of the fête, the fire and bright hues of those lamps had out-done and out-shone her for an hour, but now, again, her glory and her silence triumphed. The rival lamps were dying: she held her course like a white fate. Drum, trumpet, bugle, had uttered their clangour and were forgotten: with pencil-ray she wrote on heaven and on earth records for archives everlasting. She and those stars seemed to me at once the types and witnesses of truth all regnant. The night-sky lit her reign: like its slow-wheeling progress, advanced her victory—that onward movement which has been, and is, and will be from eternity to eternity.

These oil-twinkling streets are very still: I like them for their lowliness and peace. Homeward-bound burghers pass me now and then, but these companies are pedestrian, make little noise, and are soon gone. So well do I love Villette under her present aspect, not willingly would I re-enter under a roof, but that I am bent on pursuing my strange



adventure to a successful close, and quietly regaining my bed in the great dormitory, before Madame Beck comes home.

Only one street lies between me and the Rue Fossette; as I enter it, for the first time, the sound of a carriage tears up the deep peace of this quarter. It comes this way—comes very fast. How loud sounds its rattle on the paved path! The street is narrow and I keep carefully to the causeway, The carriage thunders past, but what do I see, or fancy I see, as it rushes by? Surely something white fluttered from that window—surely a hand waved a handkerchief. Was that signal meant for me? Am I known? Who could recognize me? That is not M. de Bassompierre's carriage, nor Mrs. Bretton's; and besides, neither the Hotel Crécy nor the chateau of La Terrasse lies in that direction. Well, I have no time for conjecture: I must hurry home.

Gaining the Rue Fossette, reaching the Pensionnat, all there was still; no fiacre had yet arrived with Madame and Désirée. I had left the great door ajar; should I find it thus? Perhaps the wind or some other accident may have thrown it to with sufficient force to start the spring-bolt?



In that case, hopeless became admission ; my adventure must issue in catastrophe. I lightly pushed the heavy leaf: would it yield?

Yes. As soundless, as unresisting, as if some propitious genius had waited on a sesame-charm, in the vestibule within. Entering with bated breath, quietly making all fast, shoelessly mounting the staircase, I sought the dormitory, and reached my couch.

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Aye! I reached it, and once more drew a free inspiration. The next moment, I almost shrieked—almost, but not quite, thank Heaven!

Throughout the dormitory, throughout the house, there reigned at this hour the stillness of death. All slept, and in such hush, it seemed that none dreamed. Stretched on the nineteen beds lay nineteen forms, at full-length and motionless. On mine—the twentieth couch—nothing *ought* to have lain: I had left it void, and void should have found it. What, then, do I see between the half-drawn curtains? What dark, usurping shape, supine, long, and strange? Is it a robber who has made his way

through the open street-door, and lies there in wait? It looks very black, I think it looks—not human. Can it be a wandering dog that has come in from the street and crept and nestled hither? Will it spring, will it leap out if I approach? Approach I must. Courage! One step!—

My head reeled, for by the faint night-lamp, I saw stretched on my bed the old phantom—the NUN.

A cry at this moment might have ruined me. Be the spectacle what it might, I could afford neither consternation, scream, nor swoon. Besides, I was not overcome. Tempered by late incidents, my nerves disdained hysteria. Warm from illuminations, and music, and thronging thousands, thoroughly lashed up by a new scourge, I defied spectra. In a moment, without exclamation, I had rushed on the haunted couch; nothing leaped out, or sprung, or stirred; all the movement was mine, so was all the life, the reality, the substance, the force; as my instinct felt. I tore her up—the incubus! I held her on high—the goblin! I shook her loose—the mystery! And down she fell—down all round me—down in shreds and fragments—and I trode upon her.

Here again—behold the branchless tree, the unstabled Rosinante; the film of cloud, the flicker of moonshine. The long nun proved a long bolster dressed in a long black stole, and artfully invested with a white veil. The garments in very truth—strange as it may seem—were genuine nun's garments, and by some hand they had been disposed with a view to illusion. Whence came these vestments? Who contrived this artifice? These questions still remained. To the head-bandage was pinned a slip of paper: it bore in pencil these mocking words:—

“The nun of the attic bequeaths to Lucy Snowe her wardrobe. She will be seen in the Rue Fossette no more.”

And what and who was she that had haunted me? She, I had actually seen three times? Not a woman of my acquaintance had the stature of that ghost. She was not of female height. Not to any man I knew could the machination, for a moment, be attributed.

Still mystified beyond expression, but as thoroughly, as suddenly, relieved from all sense of the spectral and unearthly; scorning also to wear out my brain with the fret of a trivial though insoluble

riddle. I just bundled together stole, veil, and bandages, thrust them beneath my pillow, lay down, listened till I heard the wheels of Madame's home-returning fiacre, then turned, and worn out by many nights' vigils, conquered, too, perhaps, by the now reacting narcotic, I deeply slept.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE HAPPY PAIR.

THE day succeeding this remarkable Midsummer night, proved no common day. I do not mean that it brought signs in heaven above, or portents on the earth beneath; nor do I allude to meteorological phenomena, to storm, flood, or whirlwind. On the contrary: the sun rose jocund, with a July face. Morning decked her beauty with rubies, and so filled her lap with roses, that they fell from her in showers, making her path blush: the Hours woke fresh as nymphs, and emptying on the early hills their dew-vials, they stepped out dismantled of vapour: shadowless, azure, and glorious, they led the sun's steeds on a burning and unclouded course.

In short, it was as fine a day as the finest summer could boast: but I doubt whether I was not the sole inhabitant of the Rue Fossette, who cared or



remembered to note this pleasant fact. Another thought busied all other heads; a thought, indeed, which had its share in my meditations; but this master consideration, not possessing for me so entire a novelty, so overwhelming a suddenness, especially so dense a mystery, as it offered to the majority of my co-speculators thereon, left me somewhat more open than the rest, to any collateral observation or impression.

Still, while walking in the garden, feeling the sunshine, and marking the blooming and growing plants, I pondered the same subject the whole house discussed.

What subject?

Merely this. When matins came to be said, there was a place vacant in the first rank of boarders. When breakfast was served, there remained a coffee-cup unclaimed. When the housemaid made the beds, she found in one, a bolster laid lengthwise, clad in a cap and nightgown; and when Ginevra Fanshawe's music-mistress came early, as usual, to give the morning lesson, that accomplished and promising young person, her pupil, failed utterly to be forthcoming.

High and low was Miss Fanshawe sought;

through length and breadth was the house ransacked; vainly; not a trace, not an indication, not so much as a scrap of a billet rewarded the search; the nymph was vanished, engulfed in the past night, like a shooting star swallowed up by darkness.

Deep was the dismay of surveillante teachers, deeper the horror of the defaulting directress. Never had I seen Madame Beck so pale or so appalled. Here was a blow struck at her tender part, her weak side; here was damage done to her interest. How, too, had the untoward event happened? By what outlet had the fugitive taken wing? Not a casement was found unfastened, not a pane of glass broken; all the doors were bolted secure. Never to this day has Madame Beck obtained satisfaction on this point, nor indeed has anybody else concerned, save and excepting one, Lucy Snowe, who could not forget how, to facilitate a certain enterprise, a certain great door had been drawn softly to its lintel, closed, indeed, but neither bolted nor [secure. The thundering carriage-and-pair encountered were now likewise recalled, as well as that puzzling signal, the waved handkerchief.

From these premises, and one or two others, in-

accessible to any but myself, I could draw but one inference. It was a case of elopement. Morally certain on this head, and seeing Madame Beck's profound embarrassment, I at last communicated my conviction. Having alluded to M. de Hamal's suit, I found, as I expected, that Madame Beck was perfectly au fait to that affair. She had long since discussed it with Mrs. Cholmondeley, and laid her own responsibility, in the business, on that lady's shoulders. To Mrs. Cholmondeley and M. de Bassompierre she now had recourse.

We found that the Hotel Crécy was already alive to what had happened. Ginevra had written to her cousin Paulina, vaguely signifying hymeneal intentions; communications had been received from the family of de Hamal; M. de Bassompierre was on the track of the fugitives. He overtook them too late.

In the course of the week, the post brought me a note. I may as well transcribe it; it contains explanation on more than one point:—

“DEAR OLD TIM” (short for Timon),—“I am off you see — gone like a shot. Alfred and I intended to be married in this way almost

from the first; we never meant to be spliced in the humdrum way of other people; Alfred has too much spirit for that, and so have I—Dieu merci! Do you know, Alfred, who used to call you ‘the dragon,’ has seen so much of you during the last few months, that he begins to feel quite friendly towards you. He hopes you won’t miss him now that he is gone; he begs to apologize for any little trouble he may have given you. He is afraid he rather inconvenienced you once when he came upon you in the grenier, just as you were reading a letter seemingly of the most special interest; but he could not resist the temptation to give you a start, you appeared so wonderfully taken up with your correspondent. En revanche, he says you once frightened him by rushing in for a dress or a shawl, or some other chiffon, at the moment when he had struck a light, and was going to take a quiet whiff of his cigar, while waiting for me.

“Do you begin to comprehend by this time that M. le Comte de Hamal was the nun of the attic, and that he came to see your humble servant? I will tell you how he managed it. You know he has the entrée of the Athenée, where two or three of his nephews, the sons of his eldest sister, Madame

de Melcy, are students. You know the court of the Athénée is on the other side of the high wall bounding your walk, the allée défendue. Alfred can climb as well as he can dance or fence; his amusement was to make the escalade of our pensionnat by mounting, first the wall; then—by the aid of that high tree overspreading the grand berceau, and resting some of its boughs on the roof of the lower buildings of our premises—he managed to scale the first classe and the grande salle. One night, by the way, he fell out of this tree, tore down some of the branches, nearly broke his own neck, and after all, in running away, got a terrible fright, and was nearly caught by two people, Madame Beck and M. Emanuel, he thinks, walking in the alley. From the grande salle the ascent is not difficult to the highest block of building, finishing in the great garret. The skylight, you know, is day and night left half-open for air; by the sky light he entered. Nearly a year ago, I chanced to tell him our legend of the nun, that suggested his romantic idea of the spectral disguise, which I think you must allow he has very cleverly carried out.

“ But for the nun’s black gown and white veil,



he would have been caught again and again both by you and that tiger-Jesuit, M. Paul. He thinks you both capital ghost-seers, and very brave. What I wonder at is, rather your secretiveness than your courage. How could you endure the visitations of that long spectre, time after time, without crying out, telling everybody, and rousing the whole house and neighbourhood?

“ Oh, and how did you like the nun as a bed-fellow? *I* dressed her up?—didn't I do it well? Did you shriek when you saw her? *I* should have gone mad; but then you have such nerves!—real iron and bend leather! I believe you feel nothing. You havn't the same sensitiveness that a person of my constitution has. You seem to me insensible both to pain and fear and grief. You are a real old Diogenes.

“ Well, dear grandmother! and are you not mightily angry at my moonlight flitting and run-away match? I assure you it is excellent fun, and I did it partly to spite that minx, Paulina, and that bear, Dr. John—to show them that, with all their airs, I could get married as well as they. M. de Bassompierre was at first in a strange fume with Alfred; he threatened a prosecution for ‘*détourne-*

ment de mineur,' and I know not what; he was so abominably in earnest, that I found myself forced to do a little bit of the melodramatic—go down on my knees, sob, cry, drench three pocket-handkerchiefs. Of course, 'mon oncle' soon gave in; indeed, where was the use of making a fuss? I am married, and that's all about it. He still says our marriage is not legal, because I am not of age, forsooth! As if that made any difference! I am just as much married as if I were a hundred. However, we are to be married again, and I am to have a trousseau, and Mrs. Cholmondeley is going to superintend it; and there are some hopes that M. de Bassompierre will give me a decent portion, which will be very convenient, as dear Alfred has nothing but his nobility, native and hereditary, and his pay. I only wish uncle would do things unconditionally, in a generous, gentleman-like fashion; he is so disagreeable as to make the dowry depend on Alfred's giving his written promise that he will never touch cards or dice from the day it is paid down. They accuse my angel of a tendency to play: I don't know anything about that, but I *do* know he is a dear, adorable creature.

"I cannot sufficiently extol the genius with which

De Hamal managed our flight. How clever in him to select the night of the fête, when Madame (for he knows her habits), as he said, would infallibly be absent at the concert in the park. I suppose *you* must have gone with her. I watched you rise and leave the dormitory about eleven o'clock. How you returned alone, and on foot, I cannot conjecture. That surely was *you* we met in the narrow old Rue St. Jean? Did you see me wave my handkerchief from the carriage window?

“Adieu! Rejoice in my good luck: congratulate me on my supreme happiness, and believe me, dear cynic and misanthrope, yours, in the best of health and spirits,

“GINEVRA LAURA DE HAMAL,  
née FANSHAWE.

“P.S.—Remember, I am a countess now. Papa, mama, and the girls at home, will be delighted to hear that. ‘My daughter, the Countess! My sister, the Countess.’ Bravo! Sounds rather better than Mrs. John Bretton, hein?”

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In winding up Mistress Fanshawe's memoirs, the reader will no doubt expect to hear that she came finally to bitter expiation of her youthful levities. Of course, a large share of suffering lies in reserve for her future.

A few words will embody my farther knowledge respecting her.

I saw towards the close of her honeymoon. She called on Madame Beck, and sent for me into the salon. She rushed into my arms laughing. She looked very blooming and beautiful: her curls were longer, her cheeks rosier than ever: her white bonnet and her Flanders veil, her orange flowers and her bride's dress, became her mightily.

"I have got my portion!" she cried at once; (Ginevra ever stuck to the substantial; I always thought there was a good trading element in her composition, much as she scorned the "bourgeoisie;") "and uncle de Bassompierre is quite reconciled. I don't mind his calling Alfred a 'nincompoop'—that's only his coarse Scotch breeding; and I believe Paulina envies me, and Dr. John is wild with jealousy—fit to blow his brains out—and I'm so happy! I really think I've hardly anything left to wish for—unless it be a

carriage and a hotel, and—oh! I must introduce you to ‘mon mari.’ Alfred, come here!”

And Alfred appeared from the inner salon, where he was talking to Madame Beck, receiving the blended felicitations and reprimands of that lady. I was presented under my various names: the Dragon, Diogenes, and Timon. The young Colonel was very polite. He made me a prettily-turned, neatly-worded apology, about the ghost-visits, &c., concluding with saying that “the best excuse for all his iniquities stood there!” pointing to his bride.

And then the bride sent him back to Madame Beck, and she took me to herself, and proceeded literally to suffocate me with her unrestrained spirits, her girlish, giddy, wild nonsense. She showed her ring exultingly; she called herself Madame la Comtesse de Hamal, and asked how it sounded, a score of times. I said very little. I gave her only the crust and rind of my nature. No matter: she expected of me nothing better—she knew me too well to look for compliments—my dry gibes pleased her well enough, and the more impassible and prosaic my mien, the more merrily she laughed.



Soon after his marriage, M. de Hamal was persuaded to leave the army as the surest way of weaning him from certain unprofitable associates and habits ; a post of attaché was procured for him, and he and his young wife went abroad. I thought she would forget me now, but she did not. For many years, she kept up a capricious, fitful sort of correspondence. During the first year or two, it was only of herself and Alfred she wrote ; then, Alfred faded in the background ; herself and a certain new comer prevailed ; one Alfred Fanshawe de Bassompierre de Hamal began to reign in his father's stead. There were great boastings about this personage, extravagant amplifications upon miracles of precocity, mixed with vehement objurgations against the phlegmatic incredulity with which I received them. I didn't know " what it was to be a mother : " " unfeeling thing that I was, the sensibilities of the maternal heart were Greek and Hebrew to me," and so on. In due course of nature this young gentleman took his degrees in teething, measles, hooping-cough : that was a terrible time for me—the mama's letters became a perfect shout of affliction—never woman was so put upon by calamity : never human being stood in such need of

sympathy. I was frightened at first, and wrote back pathetically; but I soon found out there was more cry than wool in the business, and relapsed into my natural cruel insensibility. As to the youthful sufferer, he weathered each storm like a hero. Five times was that youth "in articulo mortis," and five times did he miraculously revive.

In the course of years there arose ominous murmurings against Alfred the First; M. de Bassompierre had to be appealed to, debts had to be paid, some of them of that dismal and dingy order, called "debts of honour;" ignoble complaints and difficulties became frequent. Under every cloud, no matter what its nature, Ginevra, as of old, called out lustily for sympathy and aid. She had no notion of meeting any distress single-handed. In some shape, from some quarter or other, she was pretty sure to obtain her will, and so she got on—fighting the battle of life by proxy, and, on the whole, suffering as little as any human being I have ever known.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## FAUBOURG CLOTILDE.

MUST I, ere I close, render some account of that Freedom and Renovation which I won on the fête-night? Must I tell how I and the two stalwart companions I brought home from the illuminated park bore the test of intimate acquaintance?

I tried them the very next day. They had boasted their strength loudly when they reclaimed me from love and its bondage, but upon my demanding deeds, not words, some evidence of better comfort, some experience of a relieved life—Freedom excused himself, as for the present, impoverished and disabled to assist; and Renovation never spoke; he had died in the night suddenly.

I had nothing left for it then but to trust secretly that conjecture might have hurried me too fast and too far, to sustain the oppressive hour by reminders

of the distorting and discolouring magic of jealousy. After a short and vain struggle, I found myself brought back captive to the old rack of suspense, tied down and strained anew.

Shall I yet see him before he goes? Will he bear me in mind? Does he purpose to come? Will this day—will the next hour bring him? or must I again assay that corroding pain of long attent—that rude agony of rupture at the close, that mute, mortal wrench, which, in at once uprooting hope and doubt, shakes life; while the hand that does the violence cannot be caressed to pity, because absence interposes her barrier!

It was the Feast of the Assumption; no school was held. The boarders and teachers, after attending mass in the morning, were gone a long walk into the country to take their goûter, or afternoon meal at some farm-house. I did not go with them, for, now but two days remained ere the “Paul et Virginie” must sail, and I was clinging to my last chance, as the living waif of a wreck clings to his last raft or cable.

There was some joiners’ work to do in the first classe, some bench or desk to repair; holidays were often turned to account for the performance of these

operations, which could not be executed when the rooms were filled with pupils. As I sat solitary, purposing to adjourn to the garden and leave the coast clear, but too listless to fulfil my own intent, I heard the workman coming.

Foreign artizans and servants do everything by couples : I believe it would take two Labassecourien carpenters to drive a nail. While tying on my bonnet, which had hitherto hung by its ribbons from my idle hand, I vaguely and momentarily wondered to hear the step of but one "ouvrier." I noted, too—as captives in dungeons find sometimes dreary leisure to note the merest trifles—that this man wore shoes, and not sabots : I concluded that it must be the master-carpenter, coming to inspect, before he sent his journeymen. I threw round me my scarf. He advanced ; he opened the door ; my back was towards it ; I felt a little thrill—a curious sensation, too quick and transient to be analyzed. I turned, I stood in the supposed master-artizan's presence : looking towards the door-way, I saw it filled with a figure, and my eyes printed upon my brain the picture of M. Paul.

Hundreds of the prayers with which we weary Heaven, bring to the suppliant no fulfilment. Once



haply in life, one golden gift falls prone in the lap—one boon full and bright, perfect from Fruition's mint.

M. Emanuel wore the dress in which he probably purposed to travel—a surtout, guarded with velvet; I thought him prepared for instant departure, and yet I had understood that two days were yet to run before the ship sailed. He looked well, and cheerful. He looked kind and benign: he came in with eagerness; he was close to me in one second; he was all amity. It might be his bridegroom-mood which thus brightened him. Whatever the cause, I could not meet his sunshine with cloud. If this were my last moment with him, I would not waste it in forced, unnatural distance. I loved him well—too well not to smite out of my path even Jealousy herself, when she would have obstructed a kind farewell. A cordial word from his lips, or a gentle look from his eyes, would do me good, for all the span of life that remained to me; it would be comfort in the last strait of loneliness; I would take it—I would taste the elixir, and pride should not spill the cup.

The interview would be short, of course: he would say to me just what he had said to each of

the assembled pupils ; he would take and hold my hand two minutes ; he would touch my cheek with his lips for the first, last, only time—and then—no more. Then, indeed, the final parting, then the wide separation, the great gulf I could not pass to go to him—across which, haply, he would not glance, to remember me.

He took my hand in one of his, with the other he put back my bonnet ; he looked into my face, his luminous smile went out, his lips expressed something almost like the wordless language of a mother who finds a child greatly and unexpectedly changed, broken with illness, or worn-out by want. A check supervened.

“Paul, Paul !” said a woman’s hurried voice behind, “Paul, come into the salon ; I have yet a great many things to say to you—conversation for the whole day—and so has Victor ; and Josef is here. Come, Paul, come to your friends.”

Madame Beck, brought to the spot by vigilance or an inscrutable instinct, pressed so near, she almost thrust herself between me and M. Emanuel. “Come, Paul !” she reiterated, her eye grazing me with its hard ray like a steel stylet. She pushed against her kinsman. I thought he receded ; I

thought he would go. Pierced deeper than I could endure, made now to feel what defied suppression, I cried—

“My heart will break!”

What I felt seemed literal heart-break; but the seal of another fountain yielded under the strain: one breath from M. Paul, the whisper, “Trust me!” lifted a load, opened an outlet. With many a deep sob, with thrilling, with icy shiver, with strong trembling, and yet with relief—I wept.

“Leave her to me; it is a crisis; I will give her a cordial, and it will pass,” said the calm Madame Beck.

To be left to her and her cordial, seemed to me something like being left to the poisoner and her bowl. When M. Paul answered deeply, harshly, and briefly—

“Laissez-moi!” in the grim sound I felt a music strange, strong, but life-giving.

“Laissez-moi!” he repeated, his nostrils opening, and his facial muscles all quivering as he spoke.

“But this will never do,” said Madame, with sternness. More sternly rejoined her kinsman—

“Sortez d’ici!”

“I will send for Père Silas; on the spot I will send for him,” she threatened pertinaciously.

“Femme!” cried the professor, not now in his deep tones, but in his highest and most excited key, “Femme! sortez à l’instant!”

He was roused, and I loved him in his wrath with a passion beyond what I had yet felt.

“What you do is wrong,” pursued Madame; “it is an act characteristic of men of your unreliable, imaginative temperament; a step impulsive, injudicious, inconsistent—a proceeding vexatious, and not estimable in the view of persons of steadier and more resolute character.”

“You know not what I have of steady and resolute in me,” said he, “but you shall see; the event shall teach you. Modeste,” he continued less fiercely, “be gentle, be pitying, be a woman; look at this poor face, and relent. You know I am your friend, and the friend of your friends; in spite of your taunts, you well and deeply know I may be trusted. Of sacrificing myself I made no difficulty, but my heart is pained by what I see; it *must* have and give solace. *Leave me!*”

This time, in the “*leave me*,” there was an intonation so bitter and so imperative, I wondered that

even Madame Beck herself could for one moment delay obedience; but she stood firm; she gazed upon him dauntless; she met his eye, forbidding and fixed as stone. She was opening her lips to retort; I saw over all M. Paul's face a quick rising light and fire: I can hardly tell how he managed the movement; it did not seem violent; it kept the form of courtesy; he gave his hand; it scarce touched her, I thought; she ran, she whirled from the room; she was gone and the door shut in one second.

This flash of passion was all over very soon. He smiled as he told me to wipe my eyes; he waited quietly till I was calm, dropping from time to time a stilling, solacing word. Ere long I sat beside him once more myself—re-assured—not desperate, nor yet desolate; not friendless, not hopeless, not sick of life, and seeking death.

“It made you very sad then to lose your friend?” said he.

“It kills me to be forgotten, monsieur,” I said. “All these weary days I have not heard from you one word, and I was crushed with the possibility, growing to certainty, that you would depart without saying farewell!”



“Must I tell you what I told Modeste Beck—that you do not know me? Must I show and teach you my character? You *will* have proof that I can be a firm friend? Without clear proof this hand will not lie still in mine, it will not trust my shoulder as a safe stay? Good. The proof is ready. I come to justify myself.”

“Say anything, teach anything, prove anything, monsieur: I can listen now.”

“Then, in the first place, you must go out with me a good distance into the town. I came on purpose to fetch you.”

Without questioning his meaning, or sounding his plan, or offering the semblance of an objection, I re-tied my bonnet: I was ready.

The route he took was by the boulevards: he several times made me sit down on the seats stationed under the lime-trees; he did not ask if I was tired, but looked, and drew his own conclusions.

“All these weary days,” said he, repeating my words, with a gentle, kindly mimicry of my voice and foreign accent, not new from his lips, and of which the playful banter never wounded, not even when coupled as it often was, with the assertion, that however I might *write* his language, I *spoke*

and always should speak it imperfectly and hesitatingly. “ ‘All these weary days,’ I have not for one hour forgotten you. Faithful women err in this, that they think themselves the sole faithful of God’s creatures. On a very fervent and living truth to myself, I, too, till lately scarce dared count, from any quarter; but —— look at me.”

I lifted my happy eyes: they *were* happy now, or they would have been no interpreters of my heart.

“ Well,” said he, after some seconds’ scrutiny, “ there is no denying that signature: Constancy wrote it; her pen is of iron. Was the record painful?”

“ Severely painful,” I said, with truth. “ Withdraw her hand, monsieur; I can bear its inscribing force no more.”

“ Elle est toute pâle,” said he, speaking to himself; “ cette figure là me fait mal.”

“ Ah! I am not pleasant to look at——?”

I could not help saying this; the words came unbidden: I never remember the time when I had not a haunting dread of what might be the degree of my outward deficiency; this dread pressed me at the moment with special force.

A great softness passed upon his countenance ; his violet eyes grew suffused and glistening under their deep Spanish lashes : he started up ; “ Let us walk on.”

“ Do I displease your eyes *much* ? ” I took courage to urge : the point had its vital import for me.

He stopped, and gave me a short, strong answer—an answer which silenced, subdued, yet profoundly satisfied. Ever after that, I knew what I was for *him* ; and what I might be for the rest of the world, I ceased painfully to care. Was it weak to lay so much stress on an opinion about appearance ? I fear it might be—I fear it was ; but in that case I must avow no light share of weakness. I must own a great fear of displeasing—a strong wish moderately to please M. Paul.

Whither we rambled, I scarce know. Our walk was long, yet seemed short ; the path was pleasant, the day lovely. M. Emanuel talked of his voyage—he thought of staying away three years. On his return from Guadaloupe, he looked forward to release from liabilities and a clear course ; and what did I purpose doing in the interval of his absence ? he asked. I had talked once, he re-

mind me, of trying to be independent and keeping a little school of my own : had I dropped the idea ?

“ Indeed, I had not : I was doing my best to save what would enable me to put it in practice.”

“ He did not like leaving me in the Rue Fossette ; he feared I should miss him there too much—I should feel desolate—I should grow sad—— ?”

This was certain ; but I promised to do my best to endure.

“ Still,” said he, speaking low, “ there is another objection to your present residence. I should wish to write to you sometimes : it would not be well to have any uncertainty about the safe transmission of letters ; and in the Rue Fossette—— in short, our Catholic discipline in certain matters—though justifiable and expedient—might possibly, under peculiar circumstances, become liable to misapplication—perhaps abuse.”

“ But if you write,” said I, “ I *must* have your letters ; and I *will* have them : ten directors, twenty directresses, shall not keep them from me. I am a Protestant : I will not bear that kind of discipline : monsieur, I *will not*.”

“Doucement—doucement,” rejoined he; “we will contrive a plan; we have our resources: soyez tranquille.”

So speaking, he paused.

We were now returning from the long walk. We had reached the middle of a clean Faubourg, where the houses were small, but looked pleasant. It was before the white door-step of a very neat abode that M. Paul had halted.

“I call here,” said he.

He did not knock, but taking from his pocket a key, he opened and entered at once. Ushering me in, he shut the door behind us. No servant appeared. The vestibule was small, like the house, but freshly and tastefully painted; its vista closed in a French window with vines trained about the panes, tendrils, and green leaves kissing the glass. Silence reigned in this dwelling.

Opening an inner door, M. Paul disclosed a parlour, or salon—very tiny, but I thought, very pretty. Its delicate walls were tinged like a blush; its floor was waxed; a square of brilliant carpet covered its centre; its small round table shone like the mirror over its hearth; there was a little couch, a little chiffonière; the half-open, crimson-silk door



of which, showed porcelain on the shelves; there was a French clock, a lamp; there were ornaments in biscuit china; the recess of the single ample window was filled with a green stand, bearing three green flower-pots, each filled with a fine plant glowing in bloom; in one corner appeared a guéridon with a marble top, and upon it a work-box, and a glass filled with violets in water. The lattice of this room was open; the outer air breathing through, gave freshness, the sweet violets lent fragrance.

"Pretty, pretty place!" said I. M. Paul smiled to see me so pleased.

"Must we sit down here and wait?" I asked in a whisper, half-awed by the deep-pervading hush.

"We will first peep into one or two other nooks of this nut-shell," he replied.

"Dare you take the freedom of going all over the house?" I inquired.

"Yes, I dare," said he, quietly.

He led the way. I was shown a little kitchen with a little stove and oven, with few but bright brasses, two chairs and a table. A small cupboard held a diminutive but commodious set of earthenware.

"There is a coffee service of china in the salon,"

said M. Paul, as I looked at the six green and white dinner-plates ; the four dishes, the cups and jugs to match.

Conducted up the narrow but clean staircase, I was permitted a glimpse of two pretty cabinets of sleeping rooms ; finally, I was once more led below, and we halted with a certain ceremony before a larger door than had yet been opened.

Producing a second key, M. Emanuel adjusted it to the lock of this door. He opened, put me in before him.

“Voici !” he cried.

I found myself in a good-sized apartment, scrupulously clean, though bare, compared with those I had hitherto seen. The well-scoured boards were carpetless ; it contained two rows of green benches and desks, with an alley down the centre, terminating in an estrade, a teacher’s chair and table ; behind them a tableau. On the walls hung two maps ; in the windows flowered a few hardy plants ; in short, here was a miniature classe — complete, neat, pleasant.

“It is a school then ?” said I, “Who keeps it ? I never heard of an establishment in this faubourg.”

“Will you have the goodness to accept of a few

prospectuses for distribution in behalf of a friend of mine?" asked he, taking from his surtout-pocket some quires of these documents, and putting them into my hand. I looked, I read—printed in fair characters :—

“Externat de demoiselles. Numéro 7, Faubourg Clotilde. Directrice, Mademoiselle Lucy Snowe.”

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And what did I say to M. Paul Emanuel?

Certain junctures of our lives must always be difficult of recall to memory. Certain points, crises, certain feelings, joys, griefs, and amazements, when reviewed, must strike us as things wildered and whirling, dim as a wheel fast spun.

I can no more remember the thoughts or the words of the ten minutes succeeding this disclosure, than I can retrace the experience of my earliest year of life: and yet the first thing distinct to me is the consciousness that I was speaking very fast, repeating over and over again :—

“Did you do this, M. Paul? Is this your house? Did you furnish it? Did you get these papers printed? Do you mean me? Am I the directress?

Is there another Lucy Snowe? Tell me: say something."

But he would not speak. His pleased silence, his laughing down-look, his attitude, are visible to me now.

"How is it? I must know all—*all*," I cried.

The packet of papers fell on the floor. He had extended his hand, and I had fastened thereon, oblivious of all else.

"Ah! you said I had forgotten you all these weary days," said he. "Poor old Emanuel! These are the thanks he gets for trudging about three mortal weeks from house-painter to upholsterer, from cabinet-maker to charwoman. Lucy and Lucy's cot, the sole thoughts in his head!"

I hardly knew what to do. I first caressed the soft velvet on his cuff, and then I stroked the hand it surrounded. It was his foresight, his goodness, his silent, strong, effective goodness, that overpowered me by their proved reality. It was the assurance of his sleepless interest which broke on me like a light from heaven; it was his (I will dare to say it) his fond, tender look, which now shook me indescribably. In the midst of all, I forced myself to look at the practical.

“The trouble!” I cried, “and the cost! Had you money, M. Paul?”

“Plenty of money!” said he heartily. “The disposal of my large teaching-connection put me in possession of a handsome sum: with part of it I determined to give myself the richest treat that I *have* known or *shall* know. I like this. I have reckoned on this hour day and night lately. I would not come near you, because I would not forestal it. Reserve is neither my virtue nor my vice. If I had put myself into your power, and you had begun with your questions of look and lip—Where have you been, M. Paul? What have you been doing? What is your mystery?—my solitary first and last secret would presently have unravelled itself in your lap. Now,” he pursued, “you shall live here and have a school; you shall employ yourself while I am away; you shall think of me sometimes; you shall mind your health and happiness for my sake, and when I come back—”

There he left a blank.

I promised to do all he told me. I promised to work hard and willingly. “I will be your faithful steward,” I said; “I trust at your coming the ac-



count will be ready. Monsieur, monsieur, you are *too good!*”

In such inadequate language my feelings struggled for expression : they could not get it ; speech, brittle and unmalleable, and cold as ice, dissolved or shivered in the effort. He watched me still : he gently raised his hand to stroke my hair ; it touched my lips in passing ; I pressed it close, I paid it tribute. He was my king ; royal for me had been that hand's bounty ; to offer homage was both a joy and a duty.

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The afternoon hours were over, and the stiller time of evening shaded the quiet faubourg. M. Paul claimed my hospitality ; occupied and afoot since morning, he needed refreshment ; he said I should offer him chocolate in my pretty gold and white china service. He went out and ordered what was needful from the restaurant ; he placed the small guéridon and two chairs in the balcony outside the French window under the screening vines. With what shy joy I accepted my part as hostess, arranged the salver, served the benefactor-guest.

This balcony was in the rear of the house, the gardens of the faubourg were round us, fields extended beyond. The air was still, mild, and fresh. Above the poplars, the laurels, the cypresses, and the roses, looked up a moon so lovely and so halcyon, the heart trembled under her smile; a star shone beside her, with the unemulous ray of pure love. In a large garden near us, a jet rose from a well, and a pale statue leaned over the play of waters.

M. Paul talked to me. His voice was so modulated that it mixed harmonious with the silver whisper, the gush, the musical sigh, in which light breeze, fountain, and foliage intoned their lulling vesper.

Happy hour — stay one moment! droop those plumes, rest those wings; incline to mine that brow of Heaven! White Angel! let thy light linger; leave its reflection on succeeding clouds; bequeath its cheer to that time which needs a ray in retrospect!

Our meal was simple: the chocolate, the rolls, the plate of fresh summer fruit, cherries and strawberries bedded in green leaves, formed the whole; but it was what we both liked better than a feast,

and I took a delight inexpressible in tending M. Paul. I asked him whether his friends, Père Silas and Madame Beck knew what he had done—whether they had seen my house?

“Mon amie,” said he, “none knows what I have done save you and myself: the pleasure is consecrated to us two, unshared and unprofaned. To speak truth, there has been to me in this matter a refinement of enjoyment I would not make vulgar by communication. Besides” (smiling), “I wanted to prove to Miss Lucy that I *could* keep a secret. How often has she taunted me with lack of dignified reserve and needful caution! How many times has she saucily insinuated that all my affairs are the secret of Polichinelle!”

This was true enough: I had not spared him on this point, nor perhaps on any other that was assailable. Magnificent-minded, grand-hearted, dear, faulty little man! You deserved candour, and from me always had it.

Continuing my queries, I asked to whom the house belonged, who was my landlord, the amount of my rent. He instantly gave me these particulars in writing; he had foreseen and prepared all things.

The house was not M. Paul’s—that I guessed;

he was hardly the man to become a proprietor; I more than suspected in him a lamentable absence of the saving faculty; he could get, but not keep; he needed a treasurer. The tenement, then, belonged to a citizen in the Basse-Ville—a man of substance, M. Paul said; he startled me by adding: “a friend of yours, Miss Lucy, a person who has a most respectful regard for you.” And, to my pleasant surprise, I found the landlord was none other than M. Miret, the short-tempered and kind-hearted bookseller, who had so kindly found me a seat that eventful night in the Park. It seems M. Miret was in his station, rich, as well as much respected, and possessed several houses in this faubourg; the rent was moderate, scarce half of what it would have been, for a house of equal size, nearer the centre of Villette.

“And then,” observed M. Paul, “should fortune not favour you, though I think she will, I have the satisfaction to think you are in good hands; M. Miret will not be extortionate: the first year’s rent you already have in your savings; afterwards Miss Lucy must trust God, and herself. But now, what will you do for pupils?”

“I must distribute my prospectuses.”

“ Right ! By way of losing no time, I gave one to M. Miret yesterday. Should you object to beginning with three petite bourgeoises, the Demoiselles Miret ? They are at your service.”

“ Monsieur, you forget nothing ; you are wonderful. Object ? It would become me indeed to object ! I suppose I hardly expect at the outset to number aristocrats in my little day-school ; I care not if they never come. I shall be proud to receive M. Miret’s daughters.”

“ Besides these,” pursued he, “ another pupil offers, who will come daily to take lessons in English ; and, as she is rich, she will pay handsomely. I mean my god-daughter and ward, Justine Marie Sauveur.”

What is in a name ?—what in three words ? Till this moment I had listened with living joy—I had answered with gleeful quickness ; a name froze me ; three words struck me mute. The effect could not be hidden, and indeed I scarce tried to hide it.

“ What now ?” said M. Paul.

“ Nothing.”

“ Nothing ! Your countenance changes ; your colour and your very eyes fade. Nothing ! You



must be ill; you have some suffering; tell me what?"

I had nothing to tell.

He drew his chair nearer. He did not grow vexed, though I continued silent and icy. He tried to win a word; he entreated with perseverance, he waited with patience.

"Justine Marie is a good girl," said he; "docile and amiable; not quick—but you will like her."

"I think not. I think she must not come here." Such was my speech.

"Do you wish to puzzle me? Do you know her? But, in truth, there is something. Again you are pale as that statue. Rely on Paul Carlos: tell him the grief."

His chair touched mine; his hand, quietly advanced, turned me towards him. "Do you know Marie Justine?" said he again.

The name re-pronounced by his lips overcame me unaccountably. It did not prostrate—no, it stirred me up, running with haste and heat through my veins—recalling an hour of quick pain, many days and nights of heart-sickness. Near me, as he now sat, strongly and closely as he had long twined his life in mine—far as had progressed, and near as was

achieved our minds' and affections' assimilation—the very suggestion of interference, of heart-separation, could be heard only with a fermenting excitement, an impetuous throe, a disdainful resolve, an ire, a resistance of which no human eye or cheek could hide the flame, nor any truth-accustomed human tongue curb the cry.

“I want to tell you something,” I said; “I want to tell you all.”

“Speak, Lucy; come near; speak. Who prizes you if I do not? Who is your friend, if not Emanuel? Speak!”

I spoke. All leaped from my lips. I lacked not words now; fast I narrated; fluent I told my tale; it streamed on my tongue. I went back to the night in the park; I mentioned the medicated draught—why it was given—its goading effect—how it had torn rest from under my head, shaken me from my couch, carried me abroad with the lure of a vivid yet solemn fancy—a summer-night solitude on turf, under trees, near a deep, cool lakelet. I told the scene realized; the crowd, the masques, the music, the lamps, the splendours, the guns booming afar, the bells sounding on high. All I had encountered I detailed, all I had recognized, heard, and

seen; how I had beheld and watched himself; how I listened, how much heard, what conjectured; the whole history, in brief, summoned to his confidence, rushed thither truthful, literal, ardent, bitter.

Still as I narrated, instead of checking, he incited me to proceed; he spurred me by the gesture, the smile, the half-word. Before I had half done, he held both my hands, he consulted my eyes with a most piercing glance: there was something in his face which tended neither to calm nor to put me down; he forgot his own doctrine, he forsook his own system of repression when I most challenged its exercise. I think I deserved strong reproof; but when have we our deserts? I merited severity; he looked indulgence. To my very self I seemed imperious and unreasonable; for I forbade Justine Marie my door and roof; he smiled, betraying delight. Warm, jealous, and haughty, I knew not ti'l now that my nature had such a mood; he gathered me near his heart. I was full of faults; he took them and me all home. For the moment of utmost mutiny, he reserved the one deep spell of peace. These words caressed my ear:—

“Lucy, take my love. One day share my life. Be my dearest, first on earth.”

We walked back to the Rue Fossette by moonlight—such moonlight as fell on Eden—shining through the shades of the Great Garden, and haply gilding a path glorious, for a step divine—a Presence nameless. Once in their lives some men and women go back to these first fresh days of our great Sire and Mother—taste that grand morning's dew—bathe in its sunrise.

In the course of the walk I was told how Justine Marie Sauveur had always been regarded with the affection proper to a daughter—how, with M. Paul's consent, she had been affianced for months to one Heinrich Mülher, a wealthy young German merchant, and was to be married in the course of a year. Some of M. Emanuel's relations and connections would, indeed, it seems, have liked him to marry her, with a view to securing her fortune in the family; but to himself the scheme was repugnant, and the idea totally inadmissible.

We reached Madame Beck's door. Jean Baptiste's clock tolled nine. At this hour, in this house, eighteen months since, had this man at my side, bent before me, looked into my face and eyes, and arbitered my destiny. This very evening he had again stooped, gazed and decreed.

How different the look—how far otherwise the fate!

He deemed me born under his star: he seemed to have spread over me its beam like a banner. Once—unknown, and unloved, I held him harsh and strange; the low stature, the wiry make, the angles, the darkness, the manner, displeased me. Now, penetrated with his influence, and living by his affection, having his worth by intellect, and his goodness by heart—I preferred him before all humanity.

We parted: he gave me his pledge, and then his farewell. We parted: the next day—he sailed.



## CHAPTER XLIV.

## FINIS.

MAN cannot prophecy. Love is no oracle. Fear sometimes imagines a vain thing. Those years of absence! How had I sickened over their anticipation! The woe they must bring seemed certain as death. I knew the nature of their course: I never had doubt how it would harrow as it went. The Juggernaut on his car towered there a grim load. Seeing him draw nigh, burying his broad wheels in the oppressed soil—I, the prostrate votary—felt beforehand the annihilating craunch.

Strange to say—strange, yet true, and owning many parallels in life's experience—that anticipatory craunch proved all—yes—nearly *all* the torture. The great Juggernaut, in his great chariot, drew on lofty, loud, and sullen. He passed quietly, like a shadow sweeping the sky, at noon. Nothing but a

chilling dimness was seen or felt. I looked up. Chariot and demon charioteer were gone by; the votary still lived.

M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life. Do you scout the paradox? Listen.

I commenced my school; I worked—I worked hard. I deemed myself the steward of his property, and determined, God willing, to render a good account. Pupils came—burghers at first—a higher class ere long. About the middle of the second year an unexpected chance threw into my hands an additional hundred pounds: one day I received from England a letter containing that sum. It came from Mr. Marchmont, the cousin and heir of my dear and dead mistress. He was just recovering from a dangerous illness; the money was a peace-offering to his conscience, reproaching him in the matter of, I know not what, papers or memoranda found after his kinswoman's death—naming or recommending Lucy Snowe. Mrs. Barrett had given him my address. How far his conscience had been sinned against, I never inquired. I asked no questions, but took the cash and made it useful.

With this hundred pounds I ventured to take the

house adjoining mine. I would not leave that which M. Paul had chosen, in which he had left, and where he expected again to find me. My externat became a pensionnat; that also prospered.

The secret of my success did not lie so much in myself, in any endowment, any power of mine, as in a new state of circumstances, a wonderfully changed life, a relieved heart. The spring which moved my energies lay far away beyond seas, in an Indian isle. At parting, I had been left a legacy; such a thought for the present, such a hope for the future, such a motive for a persevering, a laborious, an enterprising, a patient and a brave course—I *could* not flag. Few things shook me now; few things had importance to vex, intimidate, or depress me: most things pleased—mere trifles had a charm.

Do not think that this genial flame sustained itself, or lived wholly on a bequeathed hope or a parting promise. A generous provider supplied bounteous fuel. I was spared all chill, all stint; I was not suffered to fear penury; I was not tried with suspense. By every vessel he wrote; he wrote as he gave and as he loved, in full-handed, full-hearted plenitude. He wrote because he liked to write; he did not abridge, because he cared not

to abridge. He sat down, he took pen and paper, because he loved Lucy and had much to say to her ; because he was faithful and thoughtful, because he was tender and true. There was no sham and no cheat, and no hollow unreal in him. Apology never dropped her slippery oil on his lips—never proffered, by his pen, her coward feints and paltry nullities : he would give neither a stone, nor an excuse—neither a scorpion, nor a disappointment ; his letters were real food that nourished, living water that refreshed.

And was I grateful? God knows! I believe that scarce a living being so remembered, so sustained, dealt with in kind so constant, honourable and noble, could be otherwise than grateful to the death.

Adherent to his own religion (in him was not the stuff of which is made the facile apostate), he freely left me my pure faith. He did not teaze nor tempt. He said :—

“ Remain a Protestant. My little English Puritan, I love Protestantism in you. I own its severe charm. There is something in its ritual I cannot receive myself, but it is the sole creed for ‘Lucy.’”

All Rome could not put into him bigotry, nor the

Propaganda itself make him a real Jesuit. He was born honest, and not false—artless, and not cunning—a freeman, and not a slave. His tenderness had rendered him ductile in a priest's hands, his affection, his devotedness, his sincere pious enthusiasm blinded his kind eyes sometimes, made him abandon justice to himself to do the work of craft, and serve the ends of selfishness ; but these are faults so rare to find, so costly to their owner to indulge, we scarce know whether they will not one day be reckoned amongst the jewels.

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And now the three years are past : M. Emanuel's return is fixed. It is Autumn ; he is to be with me ere the mists of November come. My school flourishes, my house is ready : I have made him a little library, filled its shelves with the books he left in my care : I have cultivated out of love for him (I was naturally no florist) the plants he preferred, and some of them are yet in bloom. I thought I loved him when he went away ; I love him now in another degree ; he is more my own.

The sun passes the equinox ; the days shorten, the leaves grow sere ; but—he is coming.



Frosts appear at night ; November has sent his fogs in advance ; the wind takes its autumn moan ; but—he is coming.

The skies hang full and dark—a rack sails from the west ; the clouds cast themselves into strange forms—arches and broad radiations ; there rise resplendent mornings—glorious, royal, purple as monarch in his state ; the heavens are one flame ; so wild are they, they rival battle at its thickest—so bloody, they shame Victory in her pride. I know some signs of the sky ; I have noted them ever since childhood. God, watch that sail ! Oh ! guard it !

The wind shifts to the west. Peace, peace, Banshee—“keening” at every window ! It will rise—it will swell—it shrieks out long : wander as I may through the house this night, I cannot lull the blast. The advancing hours make it strong : by midnight, all sleepless watchers hear and fear a wild south-west storm.

That storm roared frenzied for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks : it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work, would he

fold the wings whose waft was thunder—the tremor of whose plumes was storm.

Peace, be still! Oh! a thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered—not uttered till, when the hush came, some could not feel it: till, when the sun returned, his light was night to some!

Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life.

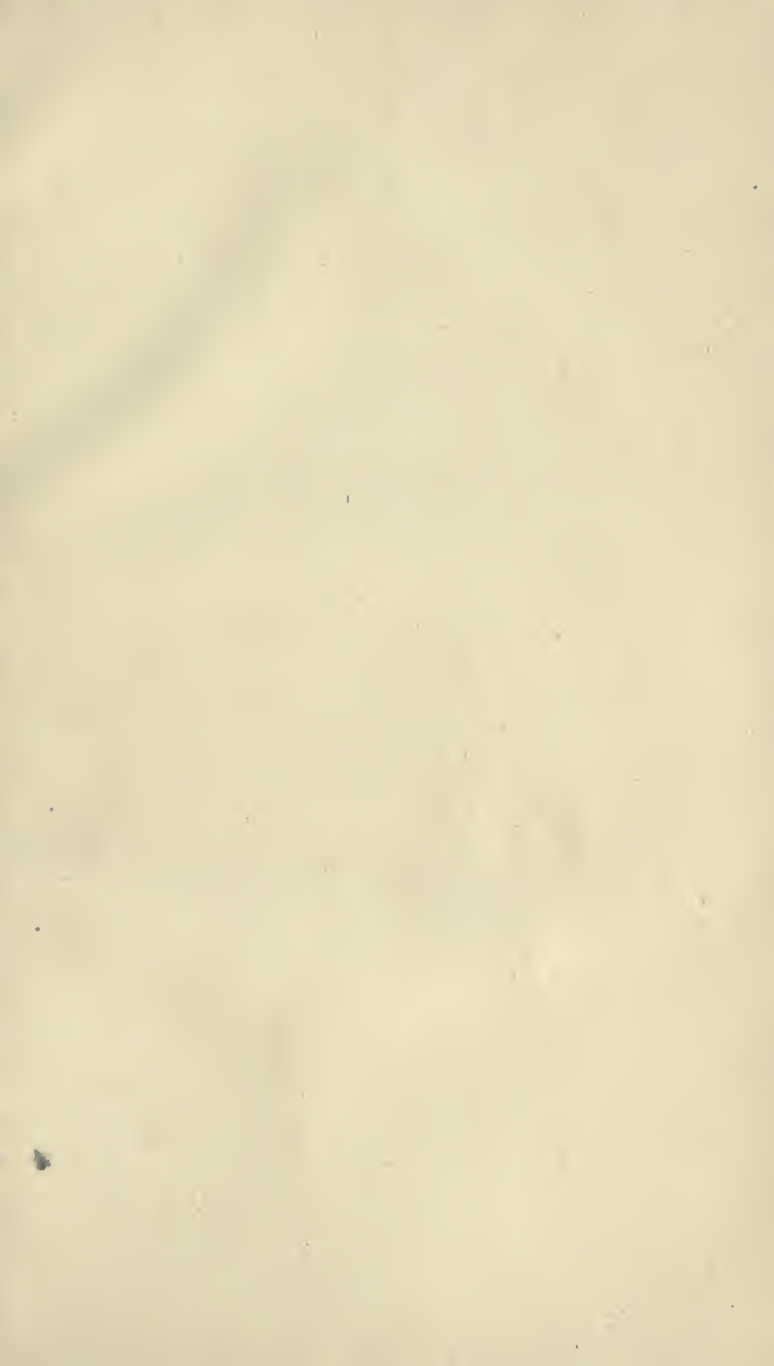
Madame Beck prospered all the days of her life; so did Père Silas; Madame Walravens fulfilled her ninetieth year before she died. Farewell.

THE END.

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